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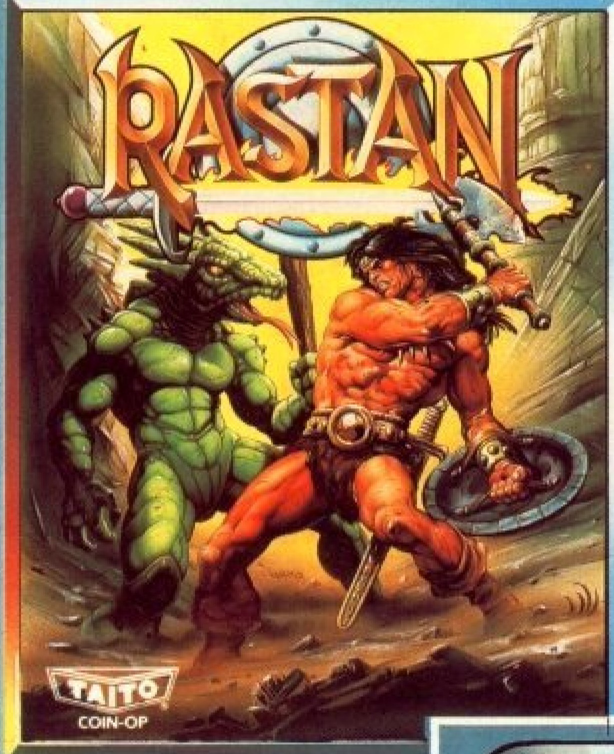
SUB BATTLE SIM·GAUNTLET 2

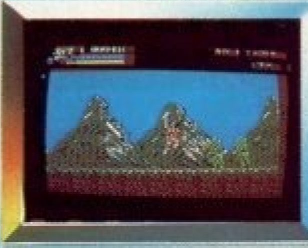
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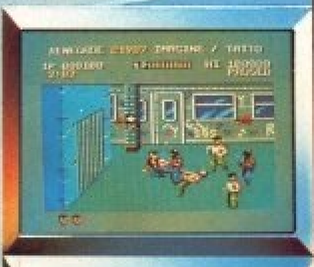
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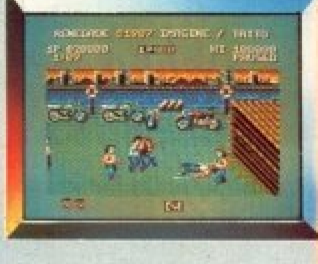


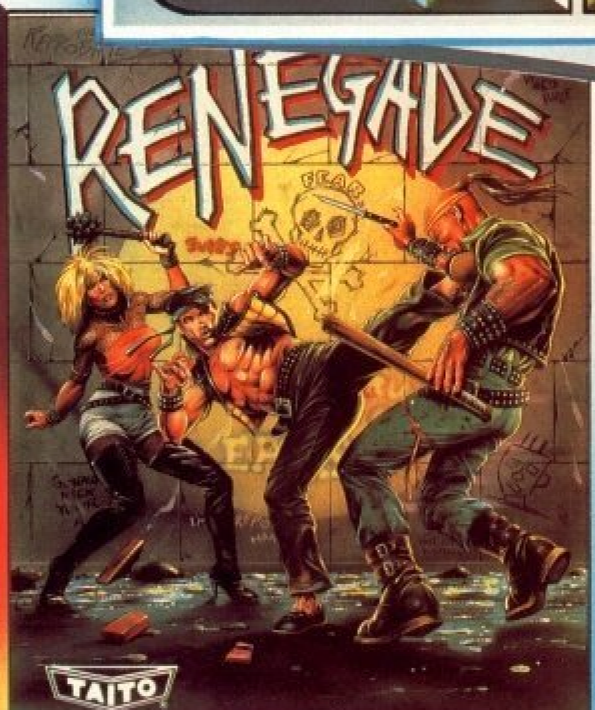


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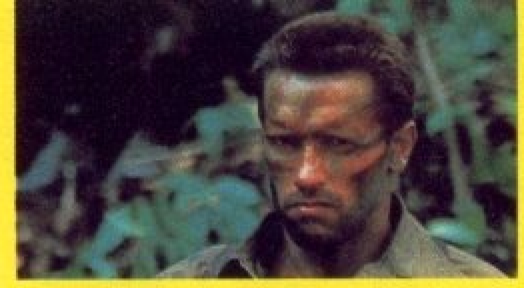


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FEBRUARY

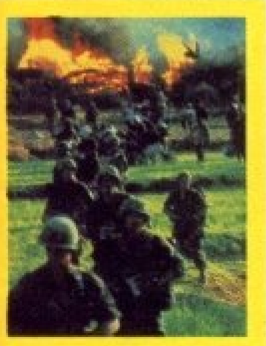
ED'S BIT ON THE SIDE

Well met y'all, a hip happy New Year and all that seasonal guff. I'm well chuffed to bring you the first issue of 1988 and my first issue as Big Ed with another in a series of fab free gifts, I'm sorry though that it should involve you paying more. We've had to raise the price due to increased costs. You'll all no doubt have ripped your pokecards off the front cover already in eager anticipation of some hacking, but before you go typing in that Wizball cheat please note the printing error. The code is spelt Wizbore with one zed. Phew! Good job we spotted that. All right don't let me keep you from the ish any longer. We think it beats the hell out of everything else. And it's going to get better with the addition of Gary Penn to the post of Dep Ed. Just watch us go...

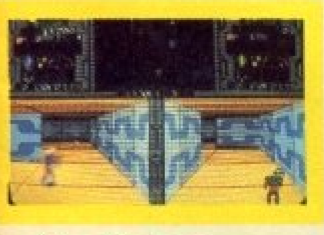
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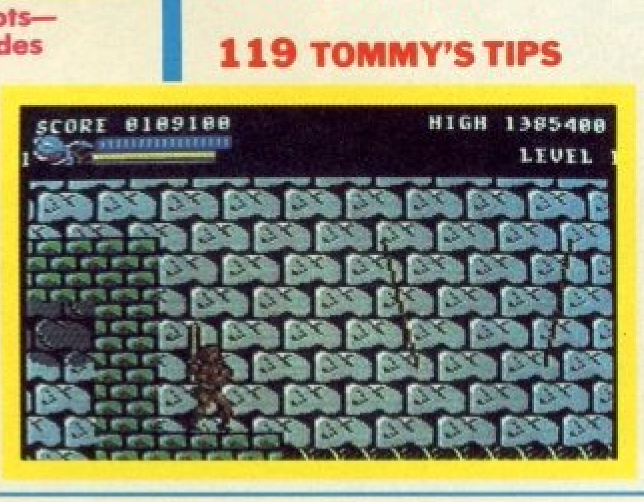
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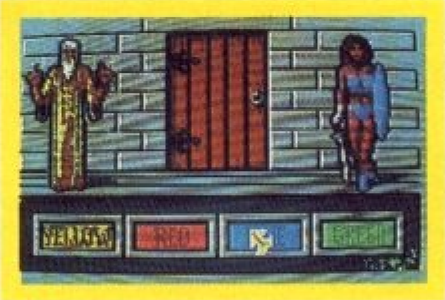




Double Dragon mapped

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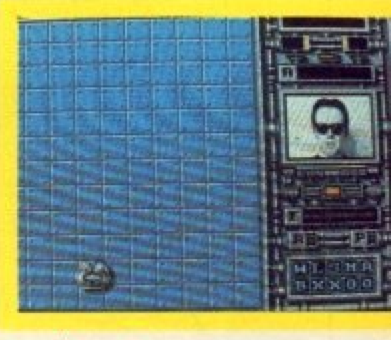
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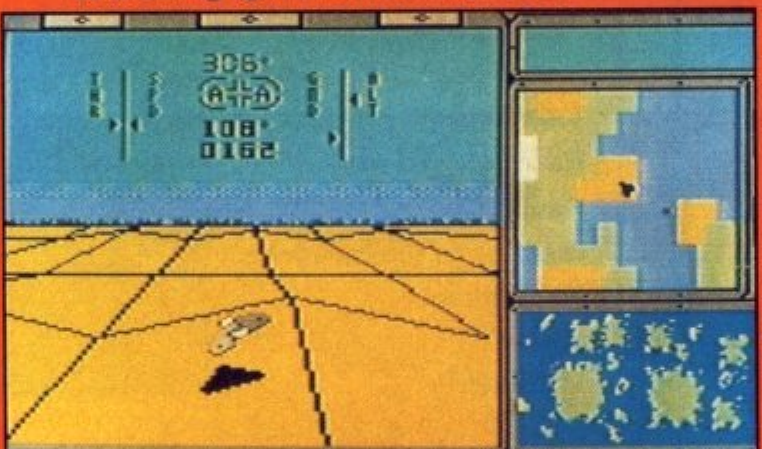
ABC
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64,606
Jan-Jun 1987

BUZZ



SKYFOX II

Nnnnnyowwwwww! No, that wasn't the first month of '88 going by, that was a Warpwarrior hurtling about the galaxy in his brand new Skyfox II warpfighter. Yup, it's Electronic Art's follow-up to *Skyfox*, entitled, with startling originality, *Skyfox II*. The battle against those cads the Xenomorphs continues in the not very sunny climes of the Cygnus constellation. Your warpfighter is laden with neutron disruptors, photon pulse bombs and anti-matter mines to assist you in your mission. With, so we're told, enhanced graphic animation, better sounds, faster action and over fifty starbases to take on, *Skyfox II* will be breaking light barriers near you soon.



ATF

Although *ATF* is based upon a real live Lockheed warplane, Digital Integration have decided against launching it as a pure flight sim. No, this latest Dig. Int. offering is a rootin' tootin' arcade-style thingie in which you zoom over a 3-D landscape, planning missions and taking on a formidable array of military targets and units with the help of your trusty advanced on-board terrain-following computer. You choose your mission, then attempt to carry it out. Keep running successful missions and you'll force the enemy to surrender. Fail, even once, and you could lose the war.

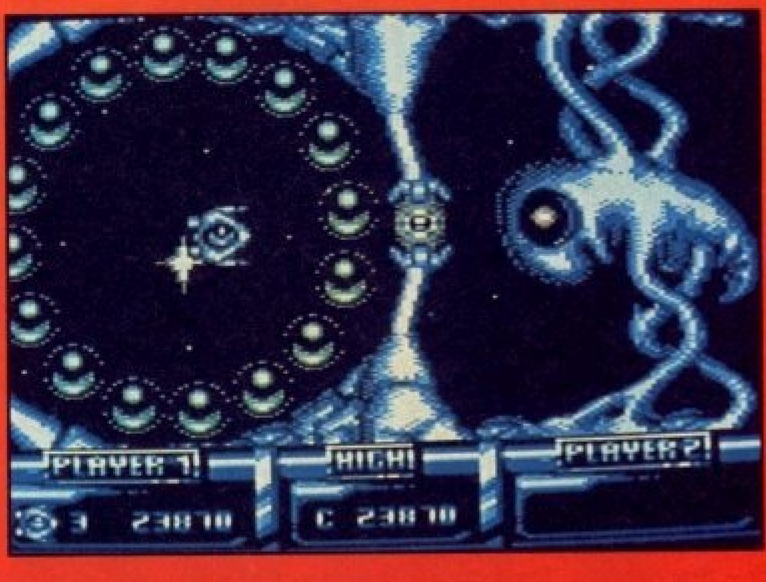
ROY OF THE ROVERS

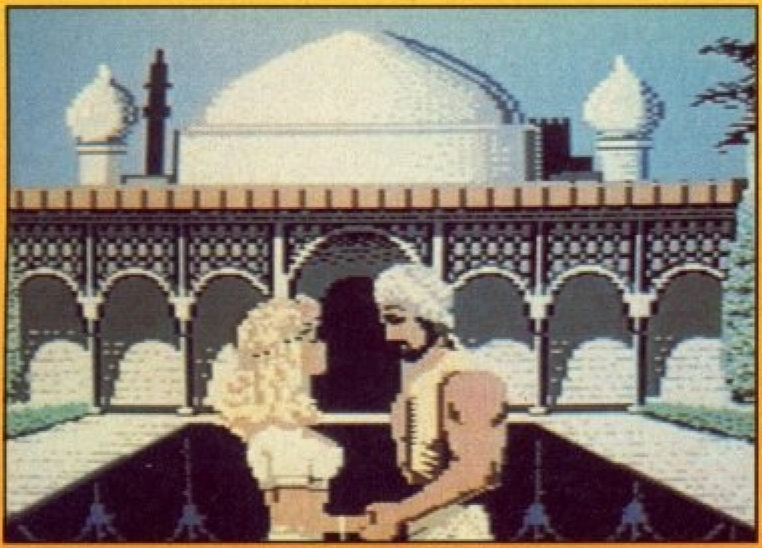
Nope, it shore ain't easy bein' a pore defenceless lil' ol' football club in these hard times. It was bad enough when Watford found themselves being tossed about between Elton John, newspaper boss Robert Maxwell and porno king Paul Raymond. But Melchester Rovers being bought up and bulldozed by a heartless developer??? It's all too much to take for player-manager comic strip star Roy Race. And, as if he didn't have problems already, the special Rovers selection picked to play in a celebrity five-a-side match organised to save the club have all been kidnapped with just hours to go before kick-off. You're Roy, by the way, and you've got to wander Melchester's mean streets trying to rescue as many of your team-mates as possible, thus giving you the greatest chance of success in the match, which you've got to win if the Rovers are to survive.



IO

March should see the release of *Io*, a truly fab-looking horizontally-scrolling shoot 'em up in the *R-Type* mold programmed by Douglas Hare and Bob Stevenson. Students of the wacky world of computer games will be intrigued to hear that this very game was originally mooted for release by Thalamus under the name of *Starline*, but through some strange set of circumstances *Io* is now being brought out by Firebird Gold. Whoever's doing the selling, the goods look like the real thing, with waves of assorted monsters, sub-aquatic craft and seaworms besetting your onscreen character and plenty of extra weaponary and shields scattered about waiting to be picked up. We can't wait.





SINBAD

No doubt you sometimes despair of these weary, cynical and angst-ridden times. No doubt you occasionally get a hankering for a return to a more noble age, when men were adventurers and rescuing beautiful princesses was considered a fair and reasonable way to spend your days. Take Sinbad, for instance. Imagine if he'd lived in the YTS era. Would he still have made epic seafaring quests battling pirates, genies and black princess in order to save a lady in distress? Of course not, he'd be too busy earning his £27 per week, sharpening pencils and delivering telexes, to think of embarking upon mystical quests. Well, anyhow those good folk up at Mirrorsoft have decided to brighten up our lives by releasing *Sinbad* — the computer game, a (and we quote) "unique blend of role playing and strategy combined with dazzling arcade-style sequences". But can a mere 64 game ever hope to transport us back to more heroic times? We're not sure, but it's worth a try.

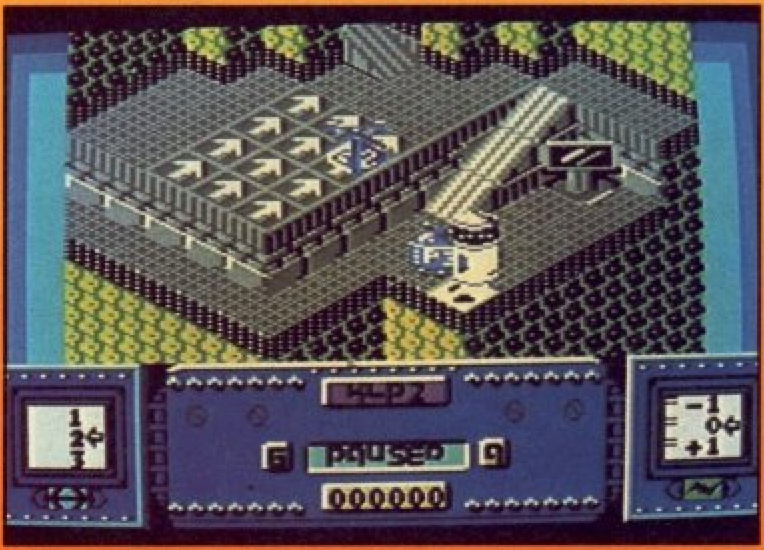


DAN DARE II

It's been well over a year since Virgin brought out the really quite spiffing *Dan Dare*, which, if our memory serves us correctly (*it does — Ed.*) was a CU screen star. Well, since then it seems that the dastardly Mekon's been cloning a genetically-engineered breed of Super-Treens. He's loaded them into a four storey spaceship which — unless he's stopped — will be launched at Earth. Dan's mission is to board the ship and destroy the Super-Treens' capsules housed on each of the four levels. The Treens, and the Mekon himself, will be doing their utmost to halt Dan and his small band of comrades. As a special treat, there's an option whereby you can play The Mekon instead, which according to Virgin, is an even harder job than Dan's one of merely having to save civilisation as we know it, and even more fun.

MAGNETRON

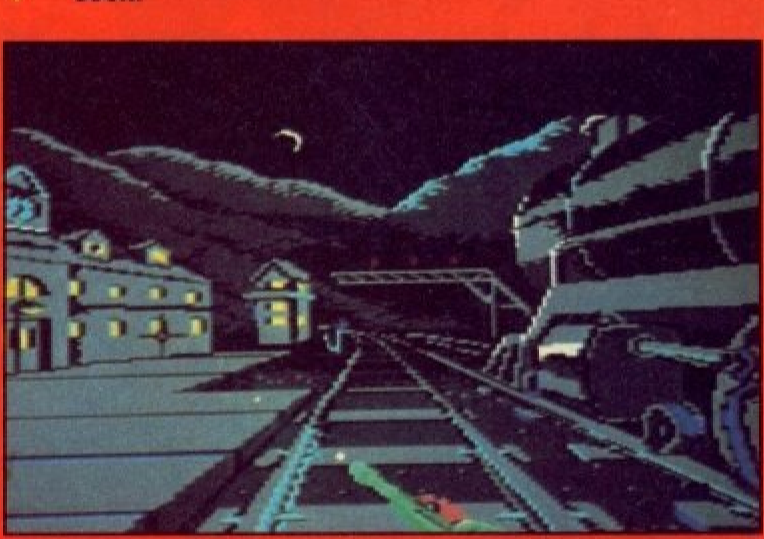
Magnetron was one of the two Graftgold games (the other being *Morpheus*) that Hewson and Telecomsoft recently had a huge tiff over. Well, as all of you who read Buzz thoroughly know, Telecomsoft won and here — ta-rant-ta-raaaa — is Steve Turner's game. In *Magnetron* you play KLP2, a small squat droid thingy who finds himself transported from his native Quazatron to the space platforms which orbit the planet Quartek. His mission is to locate and shut down some nasty reactor thingies scattered about the 3-D landscape in which he finds himself. There are a stack of different nasty droids (16 types in all) trying to foil him in his task. KLP2 can use parts from his vanquished foes to add to his power and weaponry. Of course there's a lot more to *Magnetron* than just this — and soon you'll have a chance to see for yo'selves.



THE TRAIN: ESCAPE TO NORMANDY

In Electronic Arts' newie *The Train: Escape To Normandy* you take on the role of French Resistence fighter Pierre Le Feu, as you commandeer an armoured train and attempt to bring it — and its priceless collection of French art treasures — through the German lines to safety at Riviere in Normandy. Aided only by your injured comrade Le Duc, you've got to stoke the fire, set the switches, keep the correct boiler pressure and generally do everything necessary to keep yourselves on the tracks. You'll also have to fight off ambushers, enemy planes, artillery and gunboats using your mounted machine guns and 50mm cannon. Your chance to try your hand at this unusual sim will be rolling up soon.

BUZZ



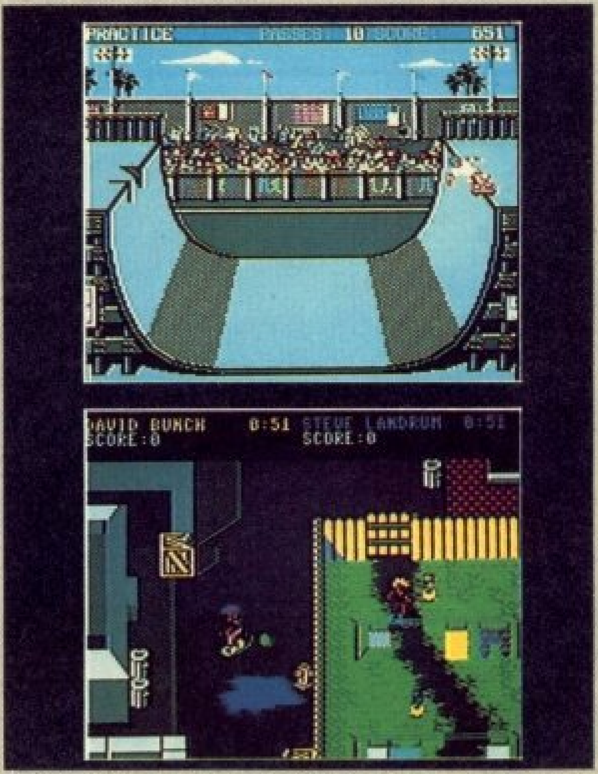

STOP PLAY
GAMES. SK
OR DIE!
STATE OF THE ART
ART OF THE STATES



Forget about games. Learn about events. Events are about competition. The Pool Joust, Downhill Race, Freestyle Ramp, High Jump and the Downhill Jam. Play alone, with a friend or pit your skills against Lester. Skate or die – it may be fun but its serious.

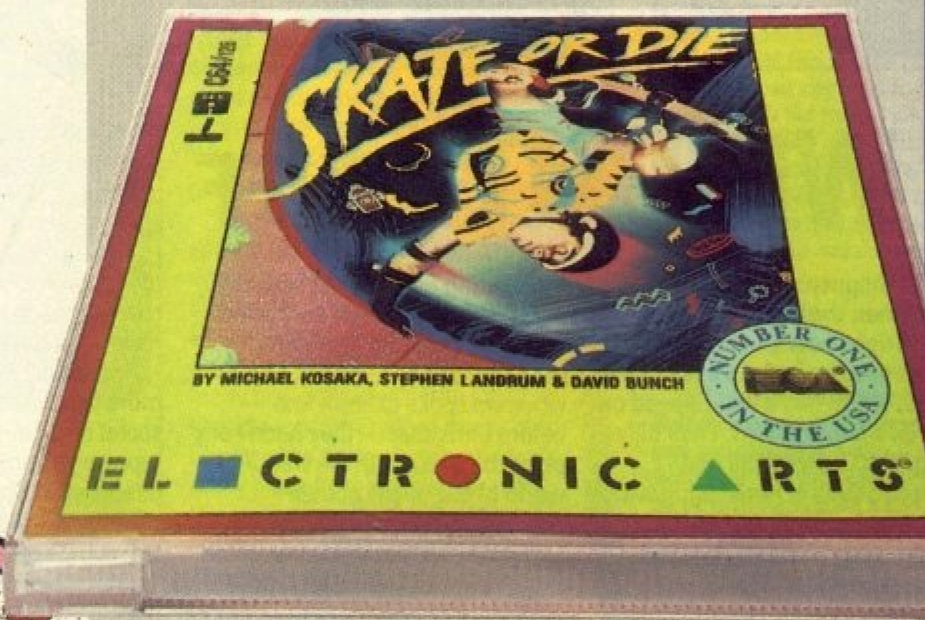
SMOKIN' THE HALF PIPE

Roar down the ramp and fly up the other side. Live on the edge where you go for rock 'n rolls, hand plants (shown here), leg plants, railslides, even methods. Get airborne for 720's, ollies, front & backside aerials, and tweaks.



SKATE & DESTROY

Karate chop your way down the baddest alley in the neighborhood. Smash up trash cans, bottles, fences, and the other guy. Rad skaters ramp off the cop car.



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BUZZ

NINJA IN NEW YORK

System 3 are currently working on a follow-up to their hugely successful game, *The Last Ninja*.

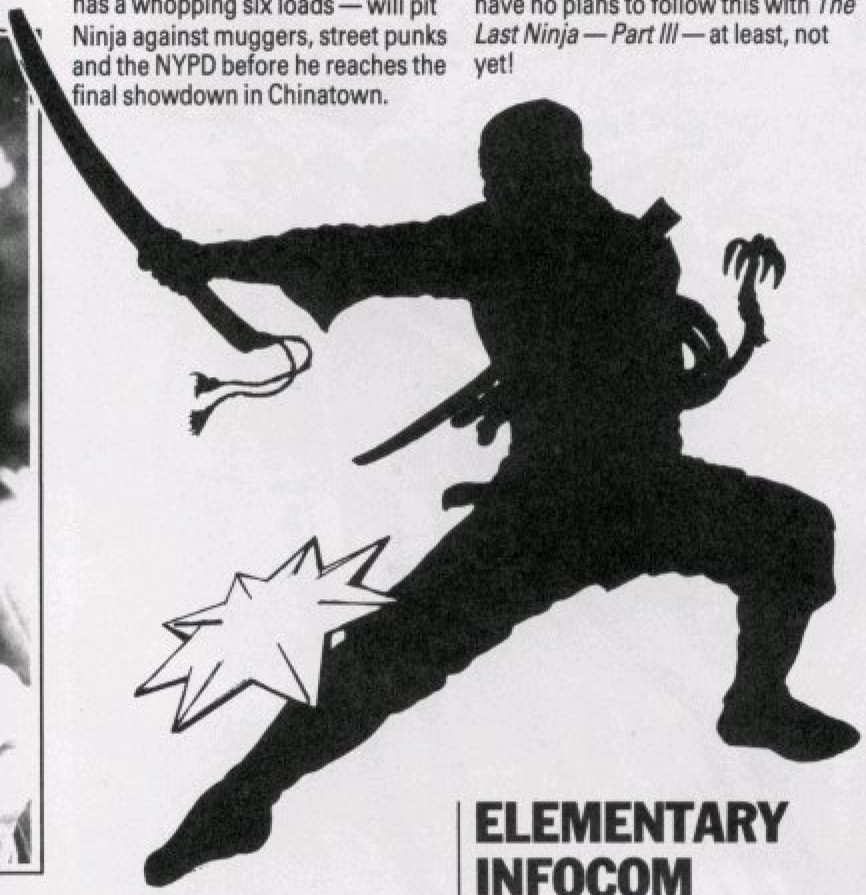
Ninja II will be set in the present day and will feature the same eternal champion of good as its predecessor. The game will find our dark clad hero continuing his fight against the evil Shogun. Apparently, Shogun has been reincarnated in 1988 as the leader of New York's most powerful Tong, and Ninja has travelled through time to take on his old foe.

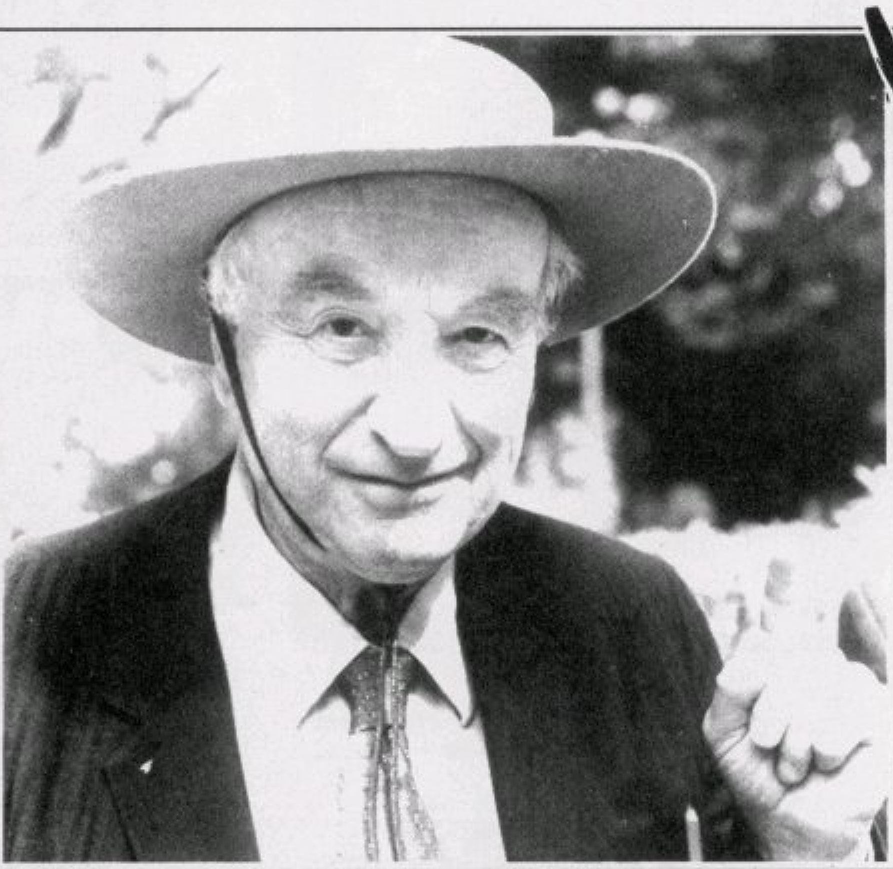
The game — which once again has a whopping six loads — will pit Ninja against muggers, street punks and the NYPD before he reaches the final showdown in Chinatown.

According to System 3's Tim Best, the company "listened to all the comments that games players made to us after *The Last Ninja* — which literally ran into hundreds before sitting down to write *Ninja II*".

Among other refinements, the sequel will feature even more detailed graphics, a scoring system and a time limit within which Ninja has to complete his mission.

With a provisional release date in late April, *Ninja II* promises to cause as big a ripple as its predecessor. Buzz understands that System 3 have no plans to follow this with *The Last Ninja — Part III* — at least, not yet!





THE WRIGHT STUFF

It had to happen: first there was *Spycatcher*, the book, ex-MI5 man Peter Wright's controversial expose of what goes on in the secret service, which had a ban slapped on it by HM's Government. Then Billy Bragg, The Oyster Band and assorted others in association with the Campaign for Press And Broadcasting Freedom released a single, "The Ballad Of A Spycatcher", which repeated some of the book's main allegations.

And so, we Buzz-folk being hip and up-to-the-millisecond, we thought to ourselves "yerra, it's only a matter of time before some enterprising software company brings out a Spycatcher game". And being aggressive journalistical types we set about ringing up various likely candidates and asking each of them whether they were considering bringing out such a game. One of those we contacted was a smallish Brighton-based company called Smart Egg. Now, when we spoke to them first — before Christmas — they hadn't any plans to dabble with the wacky world of MI5 in any of their products, but no sooner had they put down the 'phone to us than the thought struck them: "hey, wow, what a fab brill idea". And so it came to pass that Smart Egg decided that they *would* bring out a game based upon the Spycatcher concept. All because of lil' ol' us ringin' 'em up *(Kindly stop patting yourself on the back, buzz and get on with the news — Ed)*. Well, anyhow, *Plot Hatcher* is due for release in April on 64, with an Amiga version possibly following later in the year.

So what will this controversial new product actually contain? Long passages of classified material? Well probably not. A Smart Egg spokesman claimed that *Plot Hatcher* is "based on the true memoirs of a British Spy" but cunningly added that "only the facts have been changed".

Apparently *Plot Hatcher* will be more of a parody of "a career in the secret service" than a realistic representation of the goings-on described in *Spycatcher*. "There will be a spy in the MI5 who you'll have to catch", explained the spokesman, "but that's as close as we get to reality. For the most part it's not going to be a serious game."

The spokesman added that while he thought the game might prove controversial and "topical", Smart Egg were not "looking for trouble" and had taken legal advice and adhered to the legal guidelines which had been given them.

Still, we imagine interest — official and unofficial — in *Plot Hatcher* will be considerable.

ELEMENTARY INFOCOM

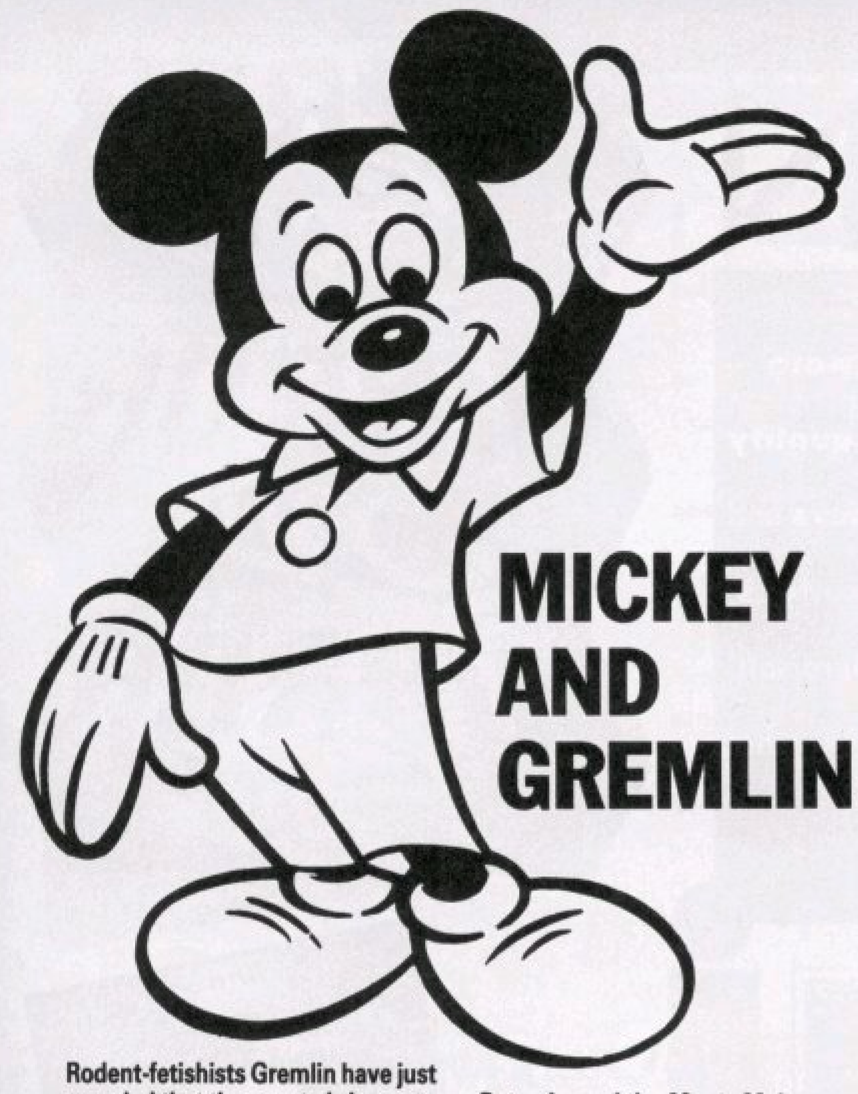
"My dear Watson, won't it be strange to appear in a computer game after all these years? And I shouldn't be surprised if you turn out to be the main character, rather than I".

"Good heavens, Holmes! That's preposterous!"

"On the contrary: it will be up to you to recover the Crown Jewels, which have been stolen by some fiend a mere two days before Her Majesties' Jubilee celebrations commence. In order to accomplish this most important mission you will have to solve a series of riddles. And, although I may be able to offer you some advice, it will be your logic and not mine, that will save the day. And, I further predict that this computer game will be released in March, 1988, by the Infocom label, and it will be entitled *Sherlock: The Riddle Of the Crown Jewels*".

"But Holmes! How can you possibly know all this?"

"Elementary, my dear Watson: I read the press release".



MICKEY AND GREMLIN

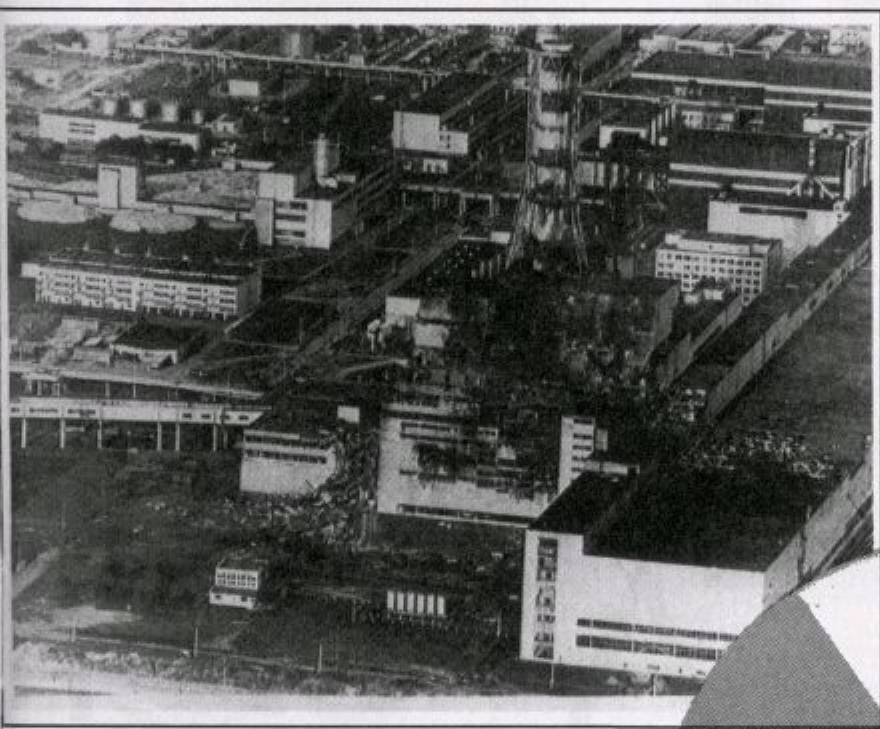
Rodent-fetishists Gremlin have just revealed that they are to bring out a game featuring that most famous and beloved of all Walt Disney characters, Mickey Mouse. According to Gremlin — a company whose previous releases include the likes of *Basil The Great Mouse Detective* and the *Monty Mole* trilogy — Sir Michael will be making his 64 debut this Spring.

The setting will be Disney Castle, where four evil witches, under the power of the Ogre King, have stolen the magician Merlin's wand, which has been used to make the Ogre King supreme ruler of the land. The wand has now been broken into four pieces, and each piece has been given to one of the evil witches to guard. Each witch resides in one of the four towers of the castle, and it has fallen to our big-eared hero Mickey to attempt to recover all four pieces so that the Ogre's spell over the land can be broken.

The witches have also laid hands on all the enchanted water to be found in the area and used it to create evil guardians for the wand pieces — all except the last flagon, that is: Mickey has been given this by Merlin to load into his water pistol, and it's with this unusual weapon that he must take on all the ghosts, ogres and ghoulies in each tower. Only by fighting his way to the top, and tossing the witch in charge off the ramparts, can he recover the wand segment.

Time is running short, and if Disneyland's magic is not to fade away completely, Mickey's going to have to recover all four segments before making his way across the lake of fire to take on the Ogre King himself.

With Mickey's universal popularity holding up — despite the fact that this year he celebrates his sixtieth birthday — it would seem that Gremlin are soon to have another hit on their hands.



GLOWING GOLD GAME

US Gold have just announced the impending release of an unusual new sim, created by Cosmi's Paul Norman: *Chernobyl.*

Apparently this unique game will put you in the central control room of a major nuclear power plant. Your responses, so we're told, may determine the safety of millions of people, and thousands of square miles of land.

Now, far be it from Buzz to [redacted] suggest that bringing out a game based on the unfortunate accident at the Russian nuclear power plant might be a teensy-weensy bit exploitative. No, if it's OK to have games about mass murder (*Jack the Ripper*) and Star Wars (*SDI*) well then why not a nuclear disaster game?

But what really puzzles us in our special CU bunker (the broom closet under the back stairs) is why Paul Norman & Co wrote their game about a lousy commie nuclear power station when we have so many fine examples of the same (fast) breed right here in merry old Blightly. We mean to say, surely the really patriotic thing would have been to bring out a Sellafield game — how about calling it *Windscale Wipeout*, or something similarly tasteful?

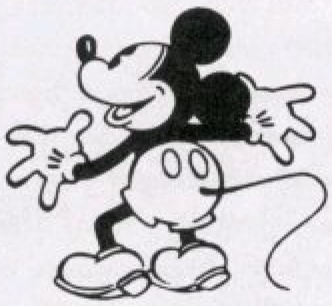
Anyhow, within the next few weeks you will all have your big chance to find out just how — and more importantly whether — you can run a nuclear power station. As the press release asks, "could you have prevented the catastrophe of Chernobyl?"

(Buzz understands that the answer "yes — get rid of all nuclear installations right now" will not be accepted).

BUZZ

***We Told You So* (1): Further to our budget story last ish, Masteronic have now confirmed that they will be introducing a range of double-sided budget games. The range, which will be called MAD X, will feature a premium game plus a distinct "B-side" game, and will retail for the same price of £2.99 as Mastertronic's current MAD range.**

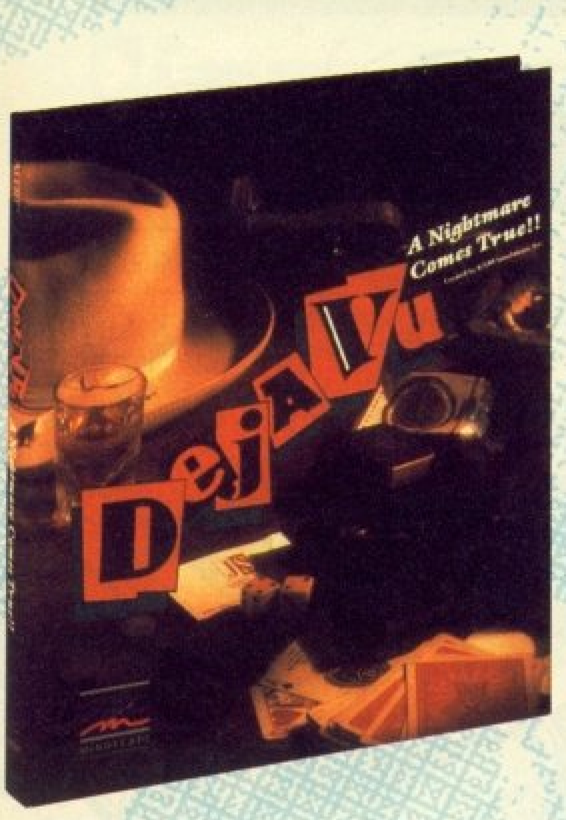
We Told You So* (2): Yes, we're patting ourselves on the back over here at Buzz with the officially-confirmed news that Activision have, as we predicted, acquired the licence to convert the last year's hottest blastalong, Sega's *Afterburner.



***Sorry About That:* Alas, alack, we boobed. In our *Crazy Cars* review last month, we incorrectly identified the producers of this Amiga drivealong as Doctorsoft, as opposed to Titus. And, just to finish the job off we quoted the price as "£9.99/cass £12.99/disk" when even Nick Kelly knows that Amiga games don't come out on "cass", and in fact the Amiga disk price for *CC* is a much more realistic £24.99.**

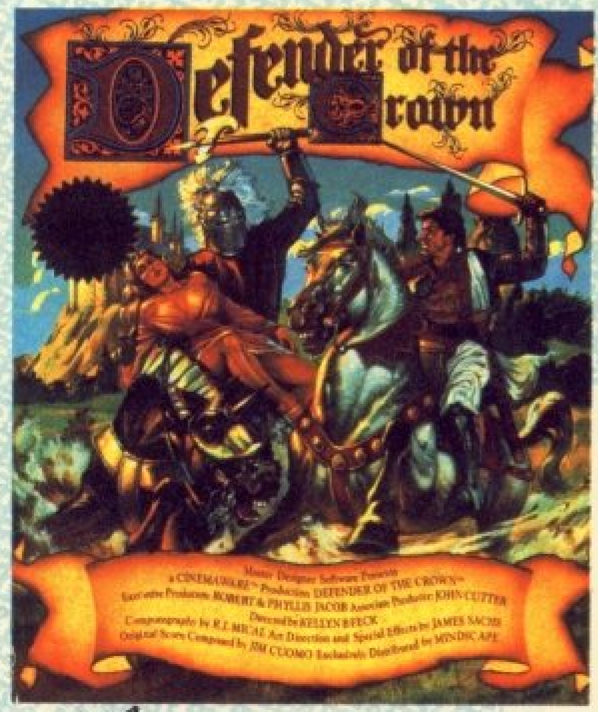
Activision/Mastertronic Tie-Up:* Budget moguls Mastertronic have just announced a major deal with Activision whereby Mastertronic will be offered Activision's ENTIRE range of backlisted product for release in the budget market. The first fruits of this union should be appearing on the shelves any day now, and will include the likes of *Ghostbusters, Eidolon* and *Ball Blazer.

***16-Bit Bonecruncher:* A little birdie (well, Superior Software'S PR company actually) has told us that the bizarre *Bonecruncher* — which features, as you are all by now sick of hearing, a little dinosaur called Bono — will soon be released on the Amiga, priced at £14.95.**



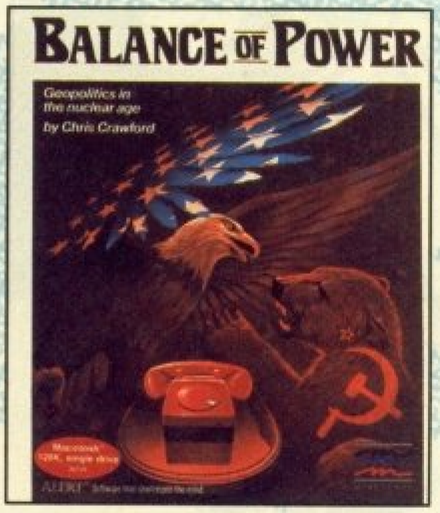
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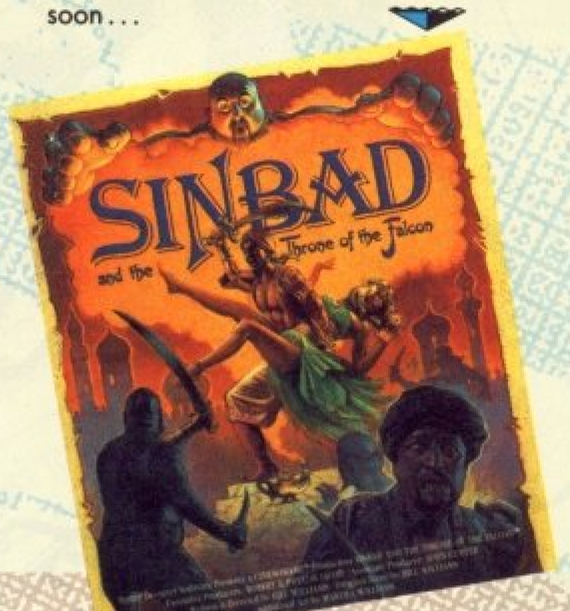
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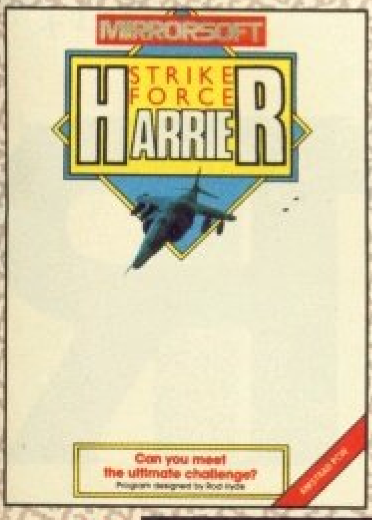


"O **BALANCE OF POWER**

One of those **games**... any serious **games player**... cannot be **without"** ... Popular Computing Weekly... **PC, ST, Amiga**...

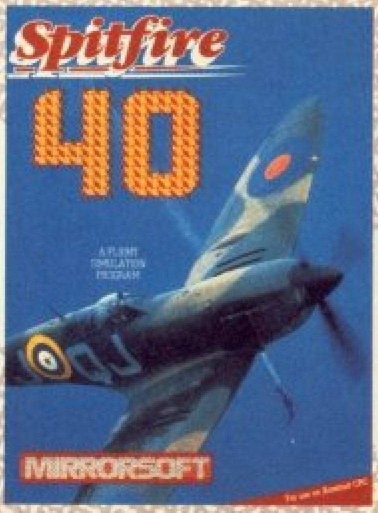
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AMIGA CHART

TM	LM		
1	5	TEST DRIVE	ELECTRONIC ARTS
2	NE	BACKLASH	NOVAGEN
3	8	INSANITY FLIGHT	MICRODEAL
4	1	BARBARIAN	PSYGNOSIS
5	3	DEFENDER OF THE CROWN	MIRRORSOFT
6	4	HUNT FOR RED OCTOBER	ARGUS
7	NE	ADVENTURE CONSTN SET	ARIOLASOFT
8	7	TERRORPODS	PSYGNOSIS
9	NE	WESTERN GAMES	MAGIC BYTES
10	NE	CRAZY CARS	DOCTORSOFT

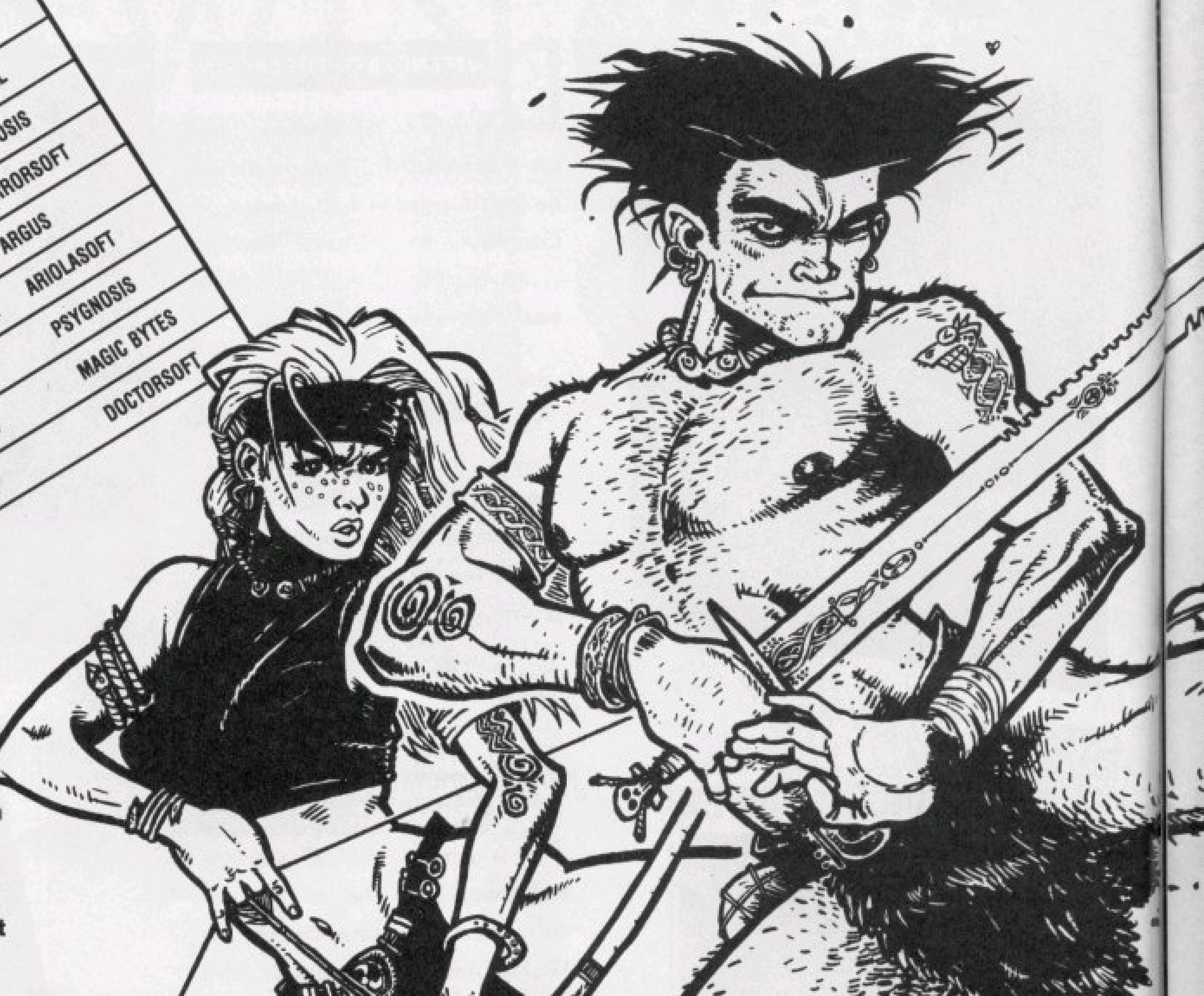


CHART CHAT Well there it is sitting proudly on top of the chart. As predicted Out Run burnt straight in at number one over Christmas. Most recent reports suggest that it's already sold 200,000 copies across all formats and looks set to become one of the biggest sellers ever.

Where does that leave the rest? Well Combat School as we predicted gave it a run for its money whilst 720° didn't make quite the expected impact.

Elsewhere there are unsurprisingly six compilations in the top twenty and only a handful of cheapos, reflecting the amount of money people have to spend at that time of year.

Over on Amiga EA's Test Drive made it the double for racing games this year, whilst Paul Woakes *Encounter* eulogy *Backlash* blasts in to second place. Watch out for *Garrison* in the future.

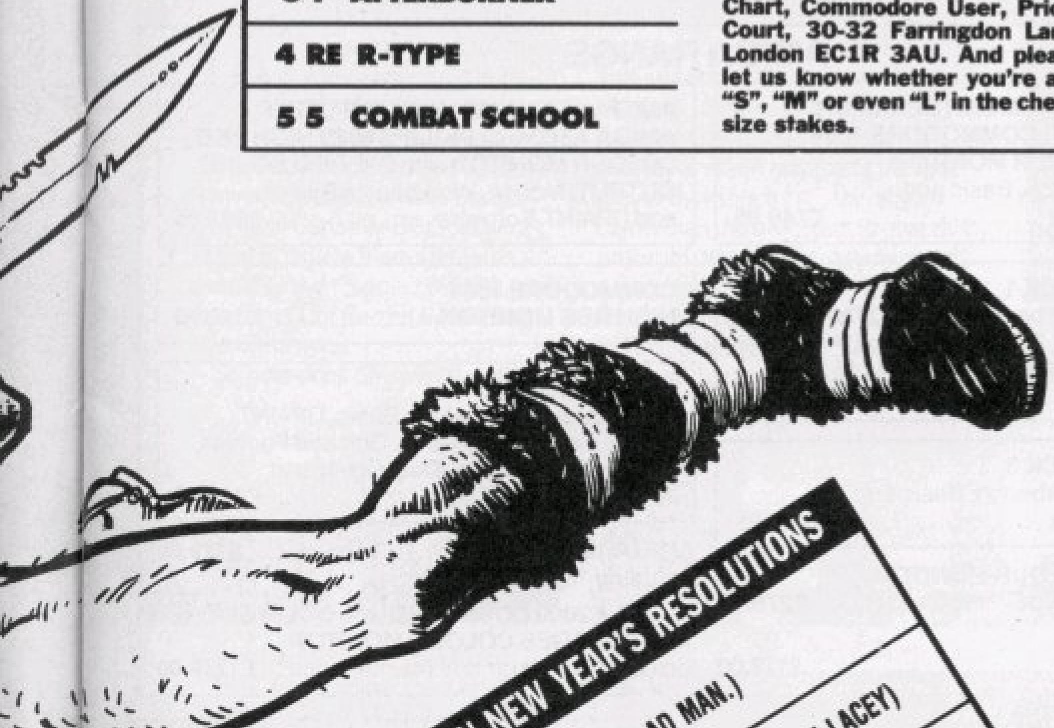
Next month we'll take a look at the big sellers of the past twelve months and see which company got the biggest slice of the pie.

CHAR

READERS COIN-OP CHART

TM	LM	
1	2	OUT RUN
2	3	DOUBLE DRAGON
3	1	AFTERBURNER
4	RE	R-TYPE
5	5	COMBAT SCHOOL

Keep sendin' in those top fives. First five randomly selected by CU's specially patented Random Selection Device (aka Nick Kelly's cloth cap, by goom) get the CU Designer Gamer T-Shirt. Entries should be sent to Coin-op Chart, Commodore User, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU. And please let us know whether you're and "S", "M" or even "L" in the chest-size stakes.



TOP TEN BROKEN NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS

1) GIVE UP SMOKING (SCRIVO THE AD MAN.)
2) LOSE WEIGHT AND GET FIT (EX ED EUGENE O' LACEY)
3) BE NICE TO PEOPLE (NEW ED MIKE PATTENDEN)
4) STOP WEARING SILLY CLOTHES (NICK O'KELLY)
5) STOP DRINKING (EVERYBODY)
6) GET UP BEFORE MIDDAY (FERDY 'DONKEY' HAMILTON)
7) STOP DRESSING IN BLACK (GARY PENN)
8) BE NICE TO ZZAP (EVERYBODY)
9) GIVE A GOOD REVIEW (KEN McMAHON)
10) MAKE MORE MONEY (MARK 'YUPPIE' PATTERSON)



RTS

C64 CHART

TM	LM		
1	NE	OUT RUN	SEGA-US GOLD
2	6	COMBAT SCHOOL	OCEAN
3	3	GRAND PRIX SIMULATION	CODE MASTERS
4	11	SOLID GOLD	US GOLD
5	1	CALIFORNIA GAMES	EPYX
6	14	BUGGSY BOY	ELITE
7	NE	LIVE AMMO	OCEAN
8	NE	MATCH DAY 2	OCEAN
9	3	GAME SET AND MATCH	OCEAN
10	NE	MAGNIFICENT 7	OCEAN
11	NE	720°	US GOLD
12	NE	GARY LINEKER'S SUPERSTAR SOCCER	GREMLIN GRAPHICS
13	4	ARCADE CLASSICS	FIREBIRD
14	15	BACK TO THE FUTURE	FIREBIRD
15	NE	FRUIT MACHINE SIMULATOR	CODE MASTERS
16	NE	10 PACK	GREMLIN GRAPHICS
17	13	SOCCER BOSS	ALTERNATIVE
18	9	STAR WARS	DOMARK
19	8	KIK START 2	MASTERTRONIC
20	17	WORLD CLASS LEADERB'D	ACCESS-US GOLD



C64 ADVENTURE CHART

TM	LM		
1	1	DEFENDER OF THE CROWN	MIRRORSOFT
2	3	GUILD OF THIEVES	RAINBIRD
3	NE	JACK THE RIPPER	CRL
4	NE	NOSFERATU	ALTERNATIVE
5	5	KILLED UNTIL DEAD	US GOLD
6	NE	GNOME RANGER	LEVEL 9
7	NE	RIGELS REVENGE	MASTERTRONIC
8	RE	VERY BIG CAVE ADVENTURE	CRL
9	10	KNIGHT ORC	RAINBIRD
10	6	PAWN	RAINBIRD

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GAUNTLET II

While a year is undoubtedly a very long time in the games software scene, there must be very few people out there who have forgotten US Gold's conversion of the arcade classic, *Gauntlet*. Certainly US Gold won't forget it, it gave them what was probably their biggest ever hit (at least until *Out Run* hit the shelves this Christmas).

So how does *Gauntlet II* compare with its illustrious predecessor?

Well, firstly, allow me a brief moan on behalf of the Ancient Society of 64 Owners. I know that the ST *is* a more powerful machine, but even so, ST owners do seem to be getting a far better deal for their hard-earned than your good selves. For a start, US Gold are apparently making available a special add-on which will allow Atari users play *Gauntlet II* in *four-player mode*, just like the huge dedicated coin-op. Perhaps even harder to forgive is the fact that some of the major enhancements to be found in the Mark II version of the coin-op have been included in the ST version – but not in the 64. This means, for instance, that the truly awesome dragon nasty has been left out of the version you'll be playing.

All of which means that when you load up *Gauntlet II*, you might be forgiven for concluding that it's really just more of the same, though that isn't in fact entirely fair.

As in the original, you and your mate (if you've got one handy) get to chose between any one of Thor (the warrior – tough, not much cop at magic), Thyra (the Valkyrie – hardy, reasonably good fighter, OK at magic), Merlin (the wizard – OK at shooting, naff hand-to-hand, great with the spells) or Questor (the elf – not quite such a weakling as Merlin, but not as clever with the mystical forces). There's one refinement here – you can both choose to be the same character, with different colour clothing to differentiate.

The object is, as any fule kno, is to waste as many nasties and pick up as many keys, potions, amulets, boxes of treasure other goodies and of course, points, for as long as you can prolong your health. At each level you've got to locate an exit and use it – on some (notably level three) I found myself simply heading for the exit straight away so as to get out in one piece. You need food and drink to maintain and add to your health level potion and amulets to increase your power and destructiveness and keys to get you through doorways.

The nasties include grunts, fire-shooting demons, rock-throwing lobbers, now-you-see-'em sorcerers, particularly lethal ghosts and, of course, the ultimate drainers of health, deaths. In addition to those old faves, there are the "It" monsters which designate the first player they touch "it", thereby causing all the monsters to give this unfortunate particular attention until he reaches the end of the level or manages to pass the "it" on.

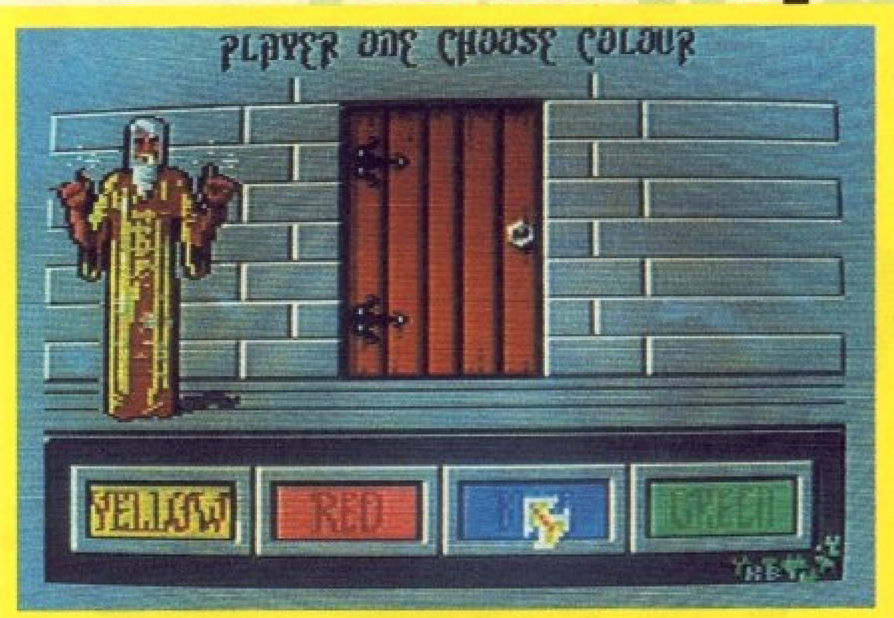
Then there are "That" monsters, which will chase you and confiscate one special power, potion of (if you've got none of either) a cool hundred points worth of health. There are also acid puddles (unhealthy but easy to avoid), stun tiles (freeze you for a few seconds), transporters which move you from one part of a level to another, flashing force fields which drain your energy when they're on and you connect with them, and even the occasional movable walls. Exits sometimes move about too, or, even more irritatingly, turn out to be false.

Your weapons can also be enhanced for example, rebounding off a maximum of three walls instead of breaking up on initial contact.

The graphics on *Gauntlet II* seem a wee bit better than on *I*, but the sound is still average-to-naff.

So, by now most of you'll have got the picture: what we have here is *Gauntlet* with a bit more thrown in, a few more little touches and refinements, some of which undoubtedly add to the enjoyment of this already thoroughly enjoyable – and seriously tough – 64 classic.

Nick Kelly



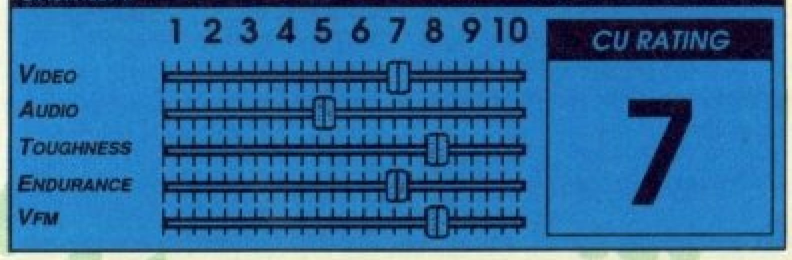
Choose a character and a colour.



Aaargghh! Cornered!

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Explore the underground tunnel network.



Rumble in the jungle.

PLATOON

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Following hot on the heels of an excellent conversion of Konami's *Combat School* comes another game with military overtones, this time based on the film which heralded the 'war-is-hell' revival in 1987. 'Platoon' concerns the exploits of a platoon of raw recruits in Vietnam, and the game follows the film reasonably closely with six sections, loaded in pairs which correspond to various points in the story.

The Jungle
This is a simplistic scrolling arcade adventure in which you have to negotiate the maze-like jungle and find the Vietnamese village. To prevent a large enemy patrol following you, the bridge has to be blown up, using the explosives found deep in the heart of the jungle. Armed enemy guerillas patrol the jungle, some leaping from the trees, and snipers appear from trapdoors in the floor and take a pot shot at you.

Your platoon comprises five men, which is effectively five lives as you only control one man at a time. A man is lost if he is hit four times or steps on a tripwire and gets blown up. Each hit depletes the platoon's morale, and should it reach zero then all is lost.

The Village
Having successfully destroyed the bridge and found the village you have to search six huts and find a torch, a map and a trapdoor. Two huts contain booby traps (which you only find out by losing a man), while another houses a Vietnamese guerilla who has to be shot on sight.

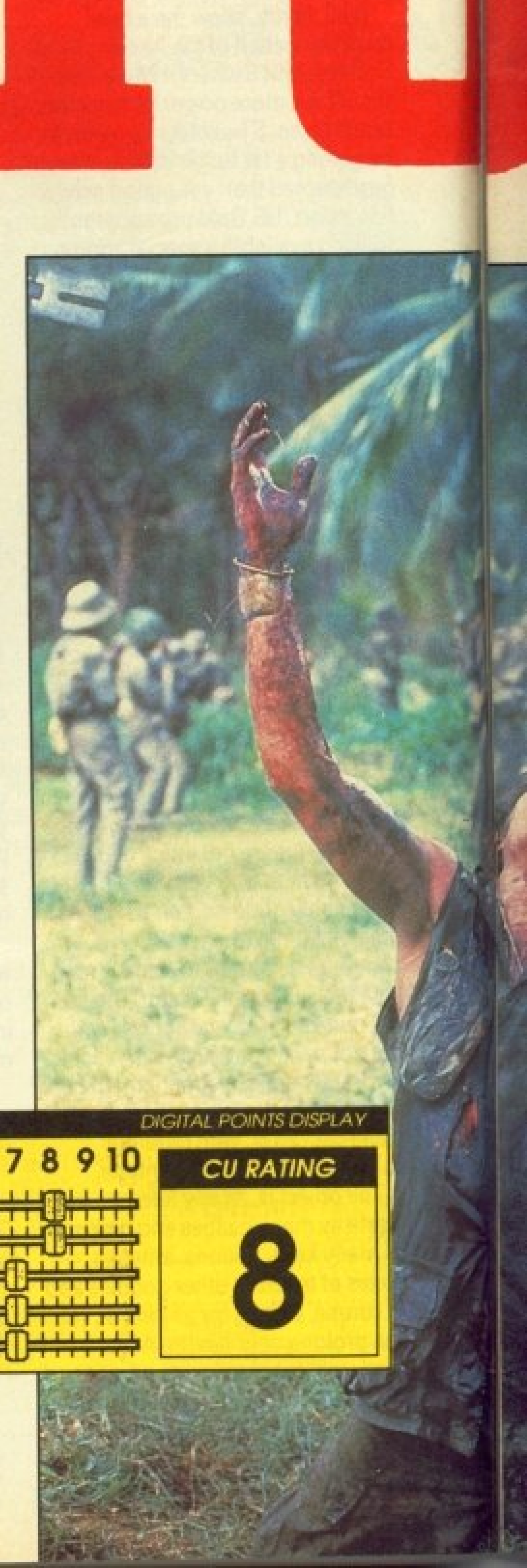
Morale is reduced if you shoot any of the unarmed villagers, which is easily done if you're not concentrating. Once the torch and map are in your possession, you can go down the trapdoor and onto the next section…

The Tunnel Network
The objective in this section is to find two boxes of flares (no, not the Mike Pattenden corduroy variety) and a compass for the next two sections. The screen is split in two, with a portion of the map displayed to the right of the first person perspective view of the tunnel network — an effect not too disimilar to that in Lucasfilm Games' *The Eidolon.*

There are ten locations to search, some containing ammunition and medical supplies, others featuring useless items such as a cup of cold, putrid tea. Once again the guerillas attempt to thwart your progress. Some simply appear in the tunnel and open fire, while others swim under the water and pop up when you least expect them — dagger in hand and your death on their mind. As soon as a guerilla appears, control is transferred to a crosshair so you can shoot him. However, ammunition is in short supply, so your shooting has to be short, accurate bursts.

The Bunker
Having found the tunnel exit you find yourself in a foxhole. It's dark and the enemy are closing in for the kill, so you have to shoot them before they shoot you. To shed a little light on your immediate surroundings you can send up a flare, although they are in limited supply and should be used sparingly. When the requisite number of guerillas have been shot it's on to the next section…

The Jungle
Another trek through the tortuous Vietnamese jungle, this time with a different objective and a different

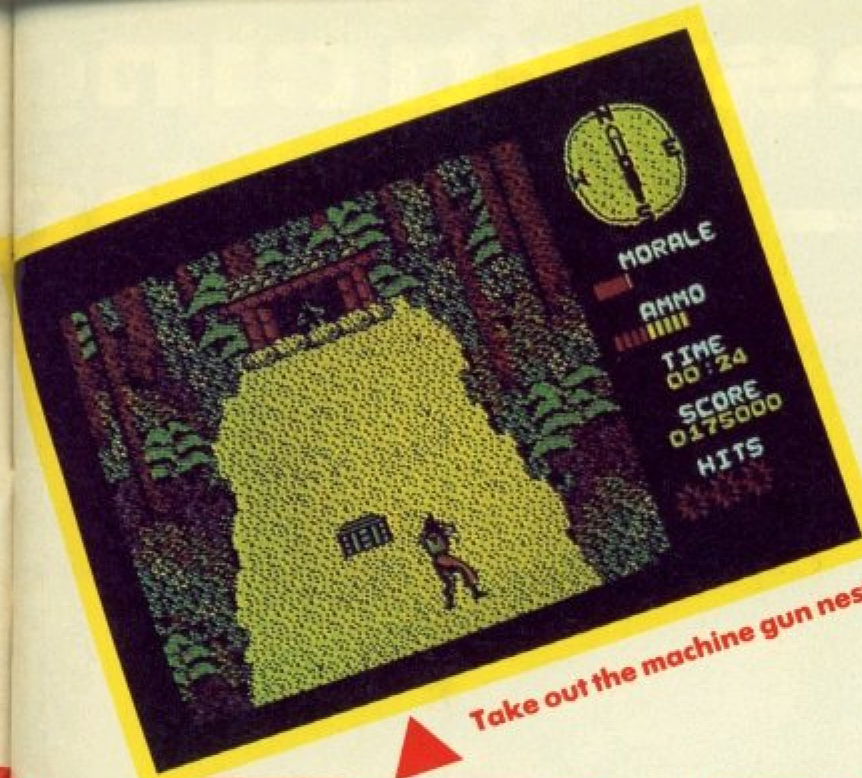


PLATOON — DIGITAL POINTS DISPLAY

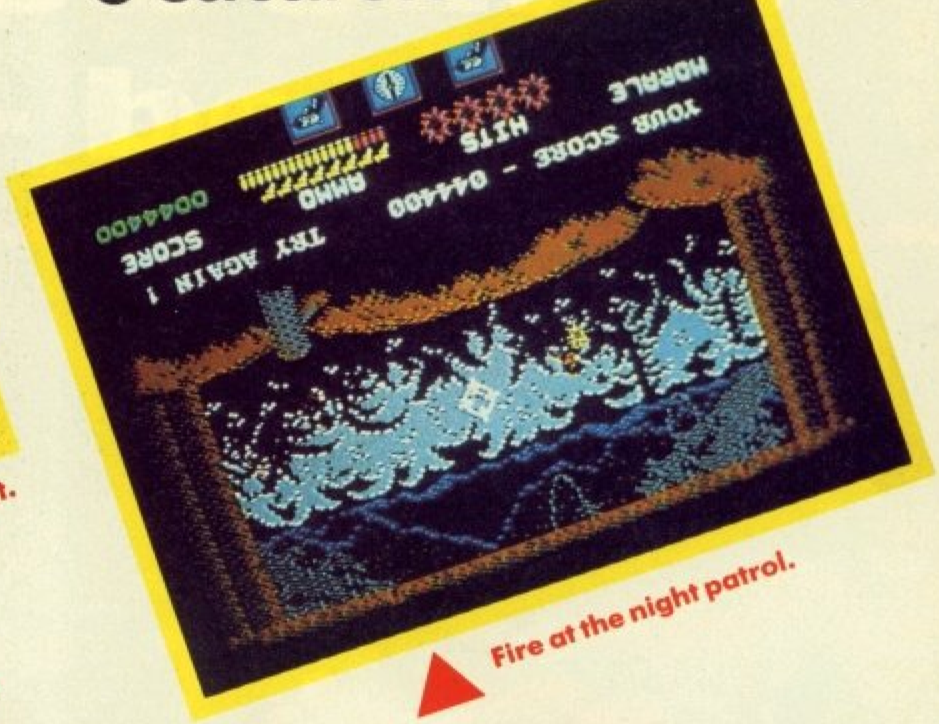
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

VIDEO
AUDIO
TOUGHNESS
ENDURANCE
VFM

CU RATING **8**



Take out the machine gun nest.



Fire at the night patrol.

DON



viewpoint. You have two minutes to reach a safe spot before the area is blown to smithereens. There are basically four routes through the jungle, although only one seems effective, as you run out of time when using the others. The jungle is split into a number of flip-screen locations, with barbed wire, mines and boulders to avoid. Enemy guerillas run back and forth across the top of the screen, shooting at you as you attempt to run deeper into the jungle, and snipers occasionally fire from the trees. Look or sound familiar? Well, suffice it to say, this bit plays very similar to a scene from Konami's *Gryzor*...

The Final Section

The treacherous Sergeant Barnes is hiding in a foxhole and has to be eliminated. It takes five direct hits with your grenades to dispose of him, which isn't as straightforward as it sounds as he keeps a constant stream of bullets and grenades flowing in your general direction.

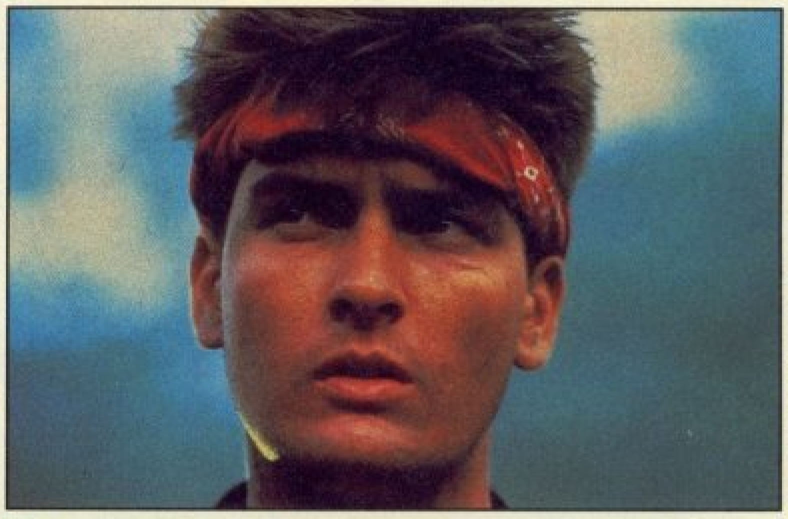
The graphics are generally neat and effective, and the music is atmospheric. Mind you, the atmosphere would have been greatly enhanced with a few more suitable sound effects. For example, breathing and heartbeat sounds in the tunnel sequence, and some cicada sounds (what do you mean, you don't watch Wildlife On One?) in the first jungle scene.

The six sections aren't particularly difficult to complete in their own right, although they are all playable. However, as a whole *Platoon* is taxing. Not because it demands dazzling arcade skills to complete it, but because it requires plenty of perseverence. You only get two lives on the later sections, so if you make a mistake you have to start from scratch, and this can prove quite frustrating.

Also mildly irritating is the fact that you have to collect the torch and map to proceed to the tunnel sequence, and you have to collect the flares and compass to play the later sections. It would have been neat if you were allowed to progress without these items, and thus had to cope without them. The tunnel sequence would be a mite trickier in the dark, without a map, and the bunker scene would be a bit more interesting with less or no flares.

That said, I thoroughly enjoyed playing *Platoon*. It's a competent blend of game styles, and Ocean have succeeded in producing a game which closely follows the plot of the film. I woud have prefered a more long-term challenge, say three or four more involved sections to complete, without having to continually replay earlier sections. Still this is without doubt one of the best film tie-ins to appear on the 64, which bodes well for Ocean's next tie-in, *Robocop*.

Gary Penn



COMPO

As you all know by now Ocean have tied up a deal with Columbia/EMI who are distributing the 'Platoon' video. That means by the power of wheels and deals we can offer five lucky readers the chance to win a copy of the film (worth £80!). Answer the question below correctly then write the answer on a postcard and send it to us together with your name and address care of: Platoon Compo, Commodore User, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU. Compo closes on Feb 18th.

Which other Vietnam film did star of 'Platoon', Charlie Sheen's father star it?

A bit of a toughie that. Guessers should turn to our Top Ten 'Nam films a couple of months back.

"...the best racing
played — even be



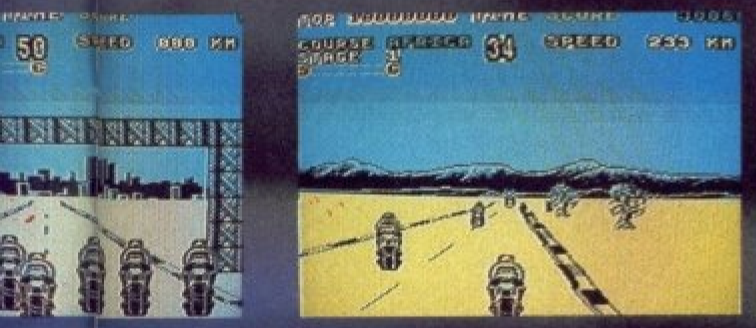
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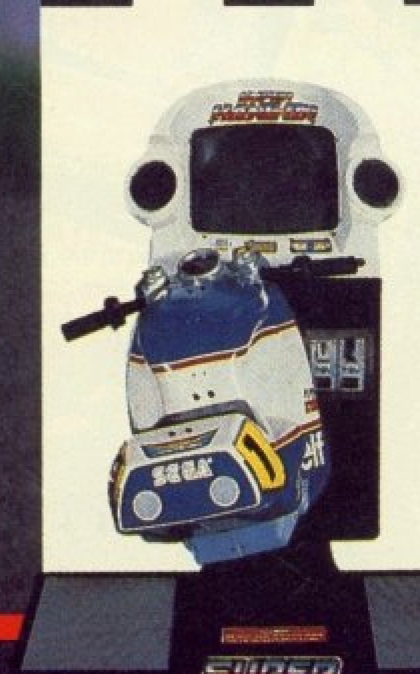
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ELECTRIC DREAMS SOFTWARE

Nimbly negotiating the treacherous terrain.



Uh-oh. The screen's gone blue — which means that the predator isn't far away . . .



It was almost called *Primeaval*, and then very nearly entitled *Hunter*. But, as fate would have it, *Predator* was eventually released as *Predator* — and rapidly became one of the biggest grossing films of 1987. Activision were quick to acquire the licence to turn the film into a computer game, (incidentally, it's rumoured that Activision also have the rights to Arnold Schwarzenegger's next movie, *The Running Man*, to be released later this year), and thanks to System 3 and programmers Source, the binary interpretation is here. . .

The concept for the *Predator* game started out as a System 3 product called *Gung-Ho!* — "before anyone had even heard of *Predator*," Tim Best is quick to point out. Activision saw Tim's storyboard shortly after acquiring the licence to produce a game based on the film, and so approached System 3 to design it. Tim ammended his design, making any necessary additions, and Hugh Riley provided the excellent graphics. Hugh was also responsible for the superb backdrops and sprites in the *Last Ninja*, and is currently beavering away on scenery for *Ninja II* (for which he has already drawn a staggering 1600 sprites!) plus some odds and sods for a shoot 'em up called *Dominator*.

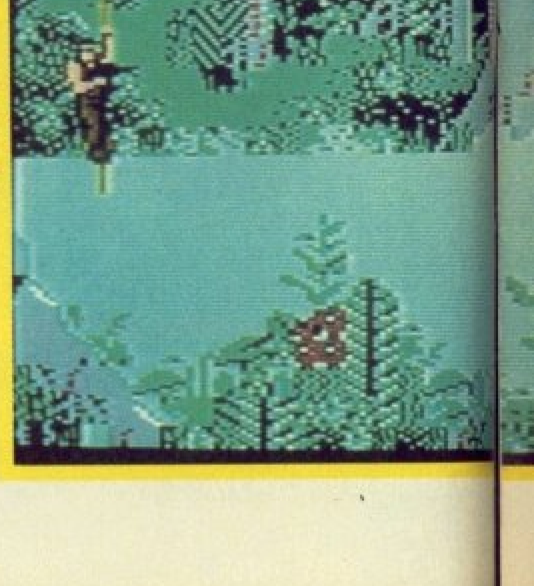
PREDAT

Predator
64/128
Activision
Price: £9.99/ cass
Price: £14.99/ disk

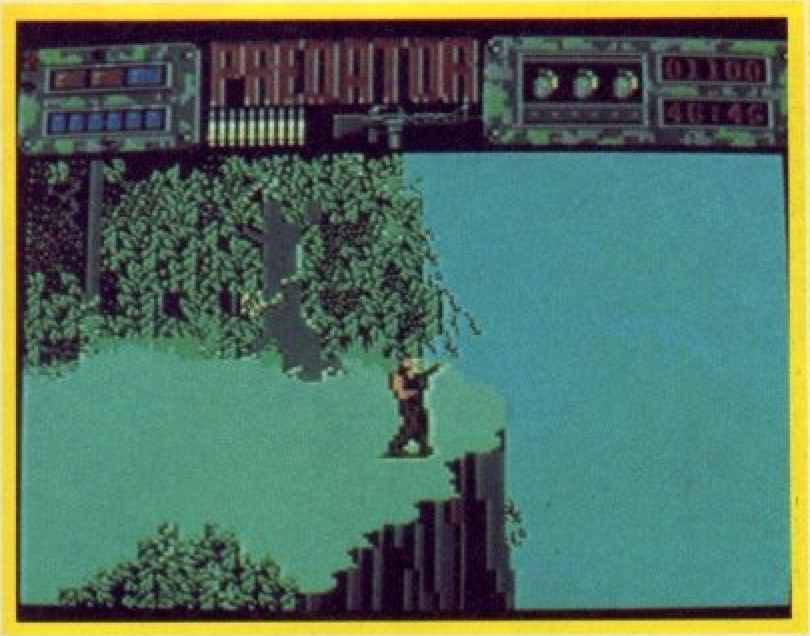


Arnie gets dropped off in the Latin American jungle.

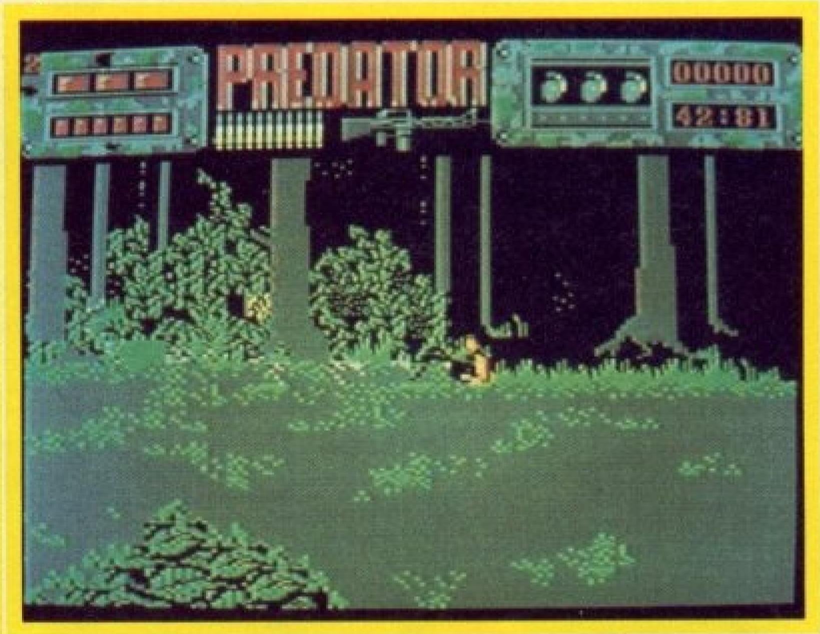
Predator, the game, is split into four sections, each loaded separately. In the first section Arnie has to negotiate a treacherous guerilla-infested jungle and wipe out the main guerilla camp. OK, so this isn't quite how it happened in the film — "There's no way we could have had the whole of Arnie's team



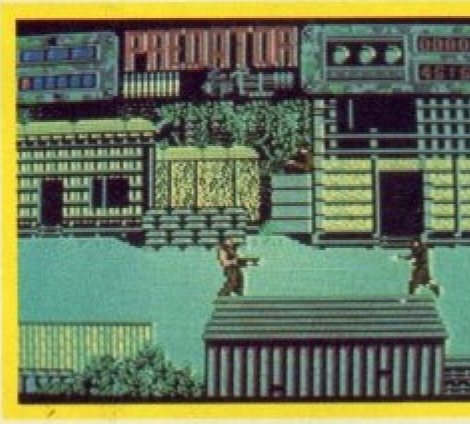
What to do, where to go . . . The end of the second level.



Waist-high in mud on the third level.



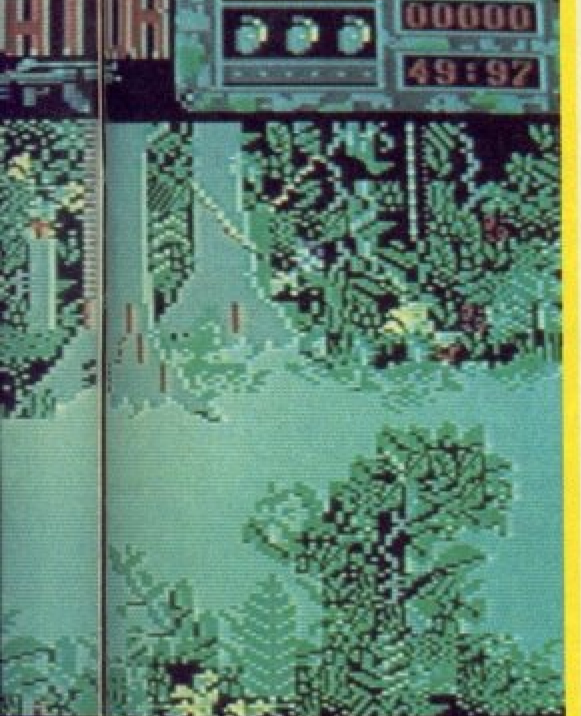
Arnie's day is made in the guerrilla camp.





C.U. Screen Star

running through the jungle at the same time, so we went for the idea that the rest of the team had been sent ahead to put paid to any guerilla activity, but they all get wiped out by the alien." Fair enough.



The screen scrolls horizontally, with gun-toting guerillas pouncing from the trees, poking their heads out of cleverly disguised holes in the ground, or simply rushing on-screen, guns blazing. Bats also hinder Arnie's progress, so it's fortunate that he can pick up more powerful weaponry along the way, courtesy of his dead colleagues. The alien also poses a threat, making itself known by casting three red dots on Arnie, before it lets loose a laser bolt. Just so that you know that the alien is watching, the screen goes blue and Arnie shimmers.

The second stage also takes place in the jungle, complete with guerillas to shoot, only this time the alien makes its presence more obvious. At times you can see its eyes in the trees, and once again the red dots makes an appearance — only more frequently. At the end of the level there's a cliff ledge, with no other obvious exits. So just what is Arnie supposed to do? Well, if you've seen the film, you'll know exactly what a man like Arnie does when he gets stuck at the top of a cliff. . .

The third section sees Arnie covered in mud — well, spots of it. "We tried changing Arnie's colour to make it look like he was covered in mud from head to toe — as in the film. But it just didn't work, so we settled for a few well-placed spots."

The mud plays an important part in this section, as the alien can't see Arnie when he's covered in mud (something to do with heat-sensitive sight). However, the mud gradually comes off, so it's up to you to keep well covered by running over spots of mud along the way. Towards the end of the level is a large log — the log on which Billy the indian confronted the alien in the film. Only in the game, it's you. Yes, you actually meet the alien, face to face. You can't kill him though — you can only wound him until he runs away.

How do you hurt him? With the bow and arrows you found along the way, that's how. However, there is something else you have to do to ensure that you inflict maximum possible damage on the alien. But I shan't mention what. . . There is one other very important item which has to be found if you are to complete the game — although fortunately, unlike, say, *Platoon*, you don't have to collect the necessary objects to proceed. No, the game is just harder without them. . . Also, you don't have to start from the very beginning when you lose a life on later sections — instead, you start from the beginning of the section on which you died.

And now, the final action. A fight to the death with the alien. Here, you are involved in continual skirmishes with the alien, with the ultimate aim of building and using a trap — exactly like the one in the film. Once you've destroyed the alien, that's it! Or is it. . .?

Predator does indeed closely follow the plot of its celuloid counterpart — with one or two acceptable modifications. However, I feel it could have been executed just that bit better. That's not to say it's poor — or even mediocre. On the contrary, *Predator* is playable and atmospheric, mainly due to Hugh's excellent scenery and effective portrayal of Arnie — the resemblance is uncanny. Overall, one of the best film-tie ins to appear on the 64, only over-shadowed marginally by *Platoon.*

Gary Penn

C.U. Screen Star

PREDATOR — DIGITAL POINTS DISPLAY

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

VIDEO
AUDIO
TOUGHNESS
ENDURANCE
VFM

CU RATING: 8





SHOOT SOME WILDLIFE!

Well, we couldn't persuade Activision to pay for you to fly into the depths of an alien-ridden jungle. And — despite protests from our Ed — in all conscience we weren't completely happy about giving one of you murderous loons out there a real MIG. Nope, we had a MUCH better idea than that: we've managed to persuade the people who've just released *Predator* on an unsuspecting world to donate an amazing Nikon F-301 dual program 35mm camera as a compo prize for one of you lucky swine to win. With auto advance, auto load and digital read-out this is THE state-of-the-art instrument for anyone who's ever fancied themselves as an undiscovered David Bailey or Ansell Adams. And just to complete your paparazzi kit, they've even agreed to throw in a whacking great 28-200 F3.5-5.3 "Superzoom" lens. So what do you have to do to win this wondrous "shoot 'em up with a difference"? Simple — just give us the answers to these three pathetically easy questions:

1. Name TWO other Arnie Schwarzenegger films APART from *Predator*.
2. What does the expression "in camera" mean?
3. What does "SLR" stand for?

Answers on a sweat-soaked green beret (a postcard will do) to Predator Compo, Commodore User, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU. Entries to arrive not later than February 26th, 1988.

WORLD TOUR GOLF

64/128
Electronic Arts
Price: £9.95

Leaderboard has had things all its own way in the golf simulation stakes up to now; such has been its success that World Tour Golf, from Electronic Arts, will stand or fall on how it compares to *Leaderboard.*

There are two parts to *World Tour Golf.* Firstly, it is a golf game using presentations of real courses, with an astonishing total of 25 to choose from on the disk version. Secondly, it contains a course construction set, which unlike the course editor in *World Class Leaderboard*, lets you design holes from scratch.

The existing courses for you to play range from well-known championship venues such as Augusta, St Andrews and St Georges, to the more obscure, most of which are American as you would expect from the game's origins. There are also seven "fictional" courses devised by the programmers. All, naturally enough, include bunkers, water and lakes and trees where applicable. You get a full set of clubs: a driver, two woods, eight irons, wedge, sand wedge and putter.

On playing the holes, the program gives you a split screen view, with a bird's eye view of the entire hole on the left and the view from your position on the right.

Controlling your shots works on similar principles to *Leaderboard.* Using the joystick, you press the fire button to call up the "swingometer", which is circular and divided up like a pie diagram. Firstly, you must click on fire again to define the length of your backswing, then click again as the dial moves down the swingometer to determine the direction of the shot. I found it slightly easier to master, if not as simply portrayed, than *Leaderboard*'s "snap line".

Putting is a more complicated affair. Hitting the ball is straightforward enough, using the swingometer again, but working out the slopes of the green and distances on the swingometer is tricky. There are keyboard options to hit particular distances, or to tap the ball, and especially useful option, the "gimme", which gives you a putt under three feet (sometimes!).

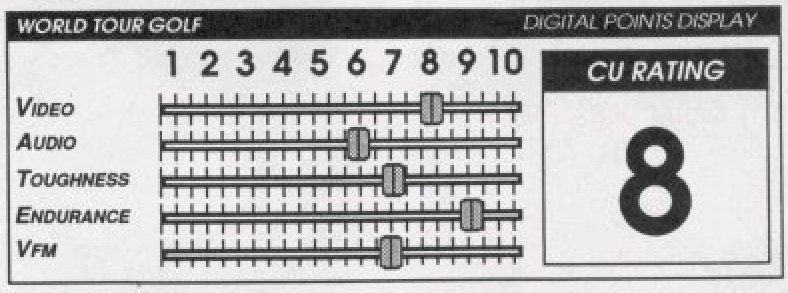
The construction set is an excellent addition which lets you draw your hole and add features such as hills, bunkers, water and trees wherever you like. These can then be saved to disk.

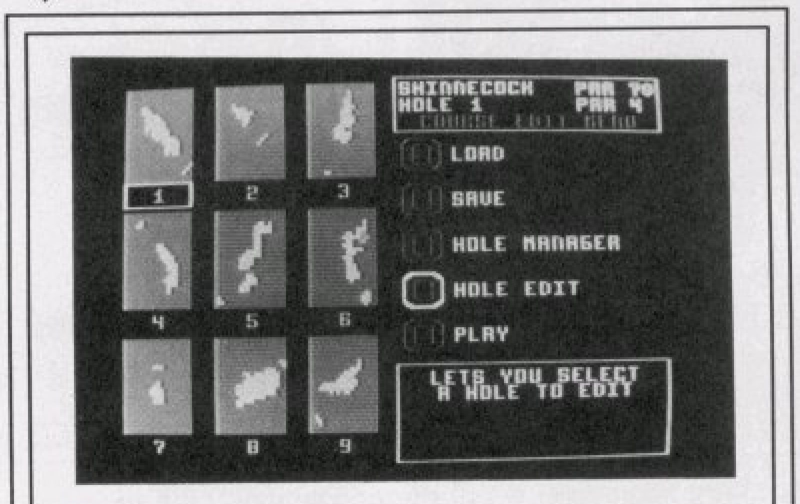
The graphics are good without being outstanding; your player is nicely animated and the holes clearly laid out. The greens look a bit primitive in close-up and the markers showing the degree of slope are not always easy to understand. The ball drops into the hole with a suitable thud, but depiction of this is sketchy.

World Tour also includes a number of finer details, such as handicapping, course conditions (are the greens wet?), and details on how good or poor your lie at each shot which will affect club selection.

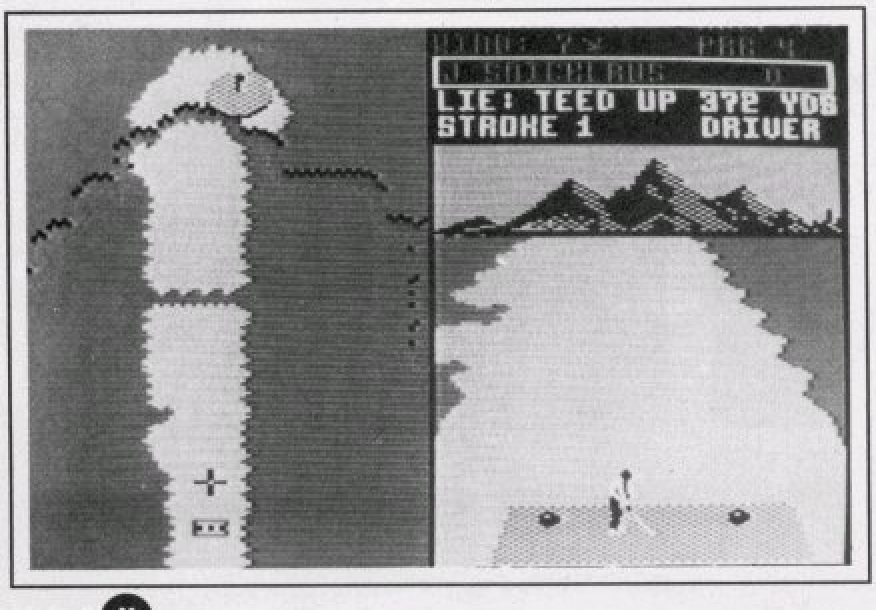
Overall, it's an excellent alternative to *Leaderboard*, particularly if you want representations of actual courses, and the construction set on its own makes it worth a look.

Christina Erskine

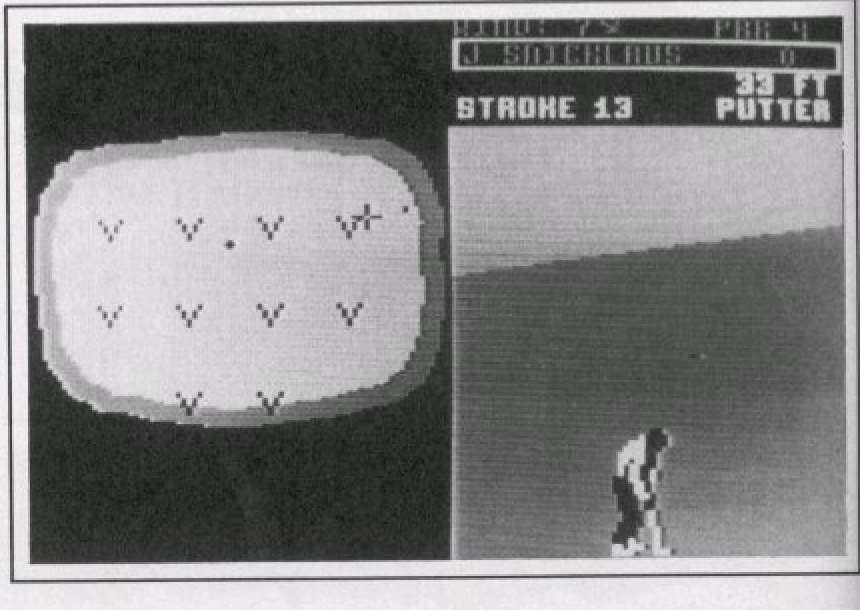




Select a course in the construction set . . .

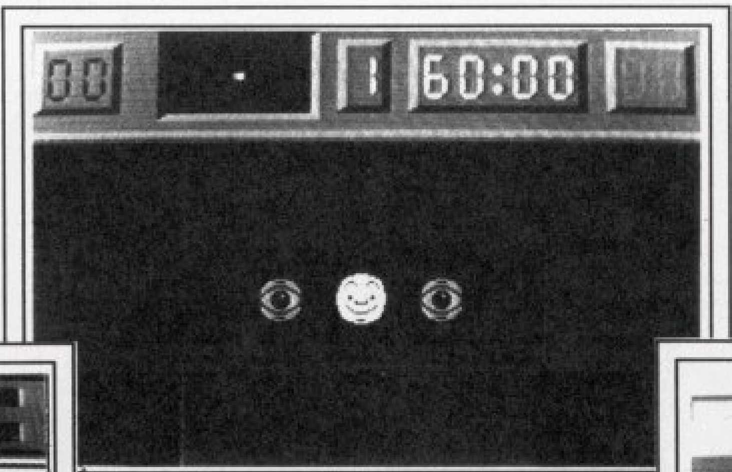


Tee up . . .

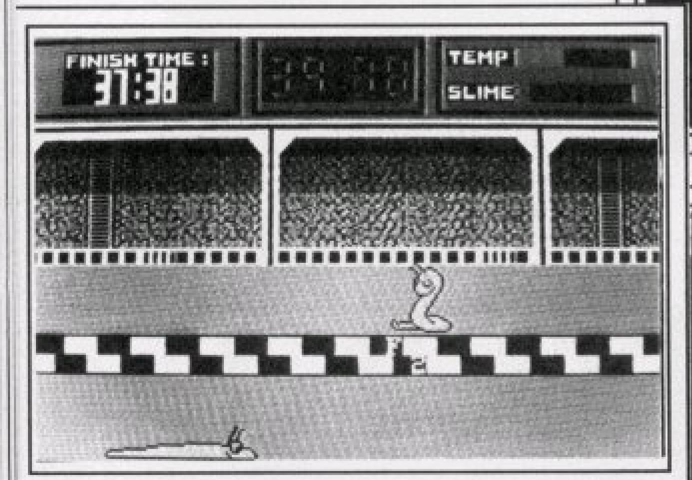


And thirteen strokes later you might putt it.

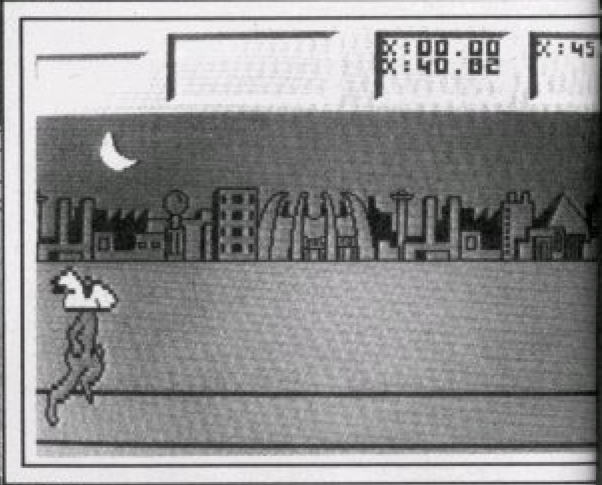
64/128
Activision
Price:
£9.99/cass
£12.99/disk



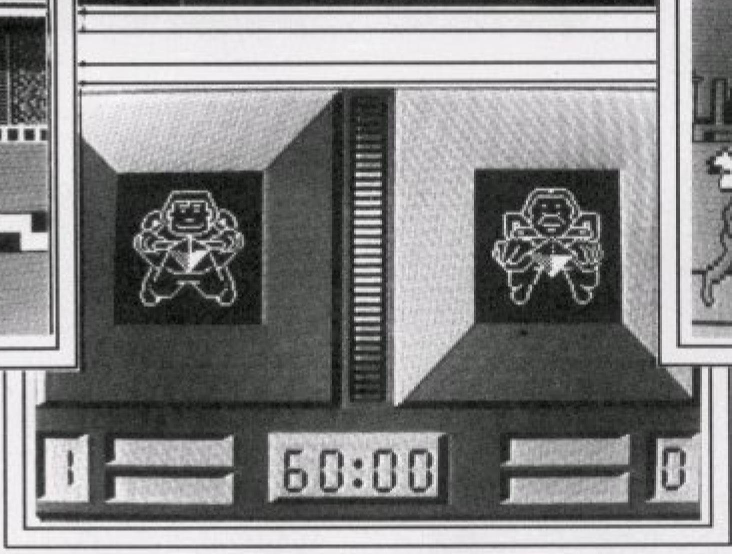
Galactic space hockey anyone?



Creeps may shine in the slime race.



Or maybe a spot of head throwing.



Lame brains can forget psychic judo.

Galactic Games

It's a nice idea and it certainly looks good on the outside. Take five whacky games and bundle them all together as a compilation. Give it a sporting theme à la *Summer Games*, only with an intergalactic angle and you've got something that shows a lot of promise. The problem is that despite its weirdness and the funny chat which comes as part of the package *Galactic Games* hardly measure up to Olympic standards.

The first event on the program is the 100 metre slime in which you participate as a worm athlete. In each of the games you take the form of an inhabitant from another planet, with the possible exception of this one as you must be the representative from Earth. The 100 metre slime works much the same way as the 100 metre anything else — you waggle joystick and the worms slime their way toward the finish line. There are a couple of intergalactic enhancements though. You must lubricate your path with slime from the fire button to avoid overheating, if you don't the result could be spontaneous combustion. Should you fall behind pulling sideways on the joystick sends you on a 'superslither' — a quick way to gain ground on your opponents. The 100M slime is O.K., but even the cute worms that wink at you won't keep you interested for much more than a few parsecs.

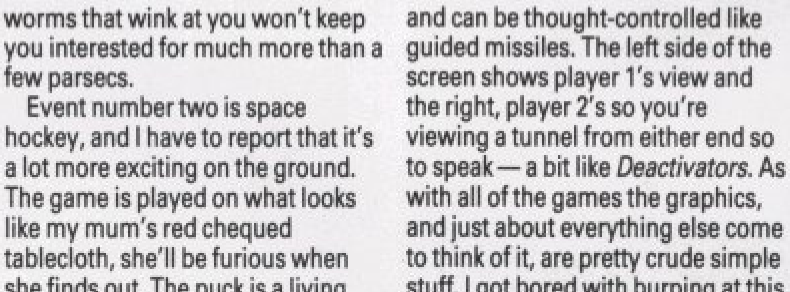
Event number two is space hockey, and I have to report that it's a lot more exciting on the ground. The game is played on what looks like my mum's red chequed tablecloth, she'll be furious when she finds out. The puck is a living creature which looks like one of those smiley things and the goals are black holes into which you can fall just as easily as the puck. The game is played just like those air hockey tables you used to get in amusement arcades, but isn't nearly such good fun.

Looking for something better I tried my hand at psychic judo, another zany idea that turns out to be fairly dull in practice. These being's brain's are in their stomachs and they sort of attack each other with psychic burps and defend themselves with mental screens. Burps are like bolts of black gunge and can be thought-controlled like guided missiles. The left side of the screen shows player 1's view and the right, player 2's so you're viewing a tunnel from either end so to speak — a bit like *Deactivators*. As with all of the games the graphics, and just about everything else come to think of it, are pretty crude simple stuff. I got bored with burping at this other guy after about, ooh, 3 parsecs . . . give or take a couple of parsecs.

Now head throwing is a different ball game altogether. The Hrunton participants in the event have detachable heads. You head for the white line (like in the Earth sport javelin) using maximum joystick waggle to build up speed. At the critical moment (you must lose your head at all costs) you hit the fire button and hold it while the anglemeter approaches the 45 degree marker, then release it. The Hrunton's head departs from it's shoulders and flies skywards. Now is the time to waggle the ears for extra lift, then, just before touchdown fire again to angle the head — if the nose fails to stick in the ground it's no throw. I particularly like the way the head then flies away pursued by the headless Hrunton's body. A good laugh, if a little short lived at 5 parsecs.

The metamorph marathon looked altogether excellent and in fact could have been *Galactic Games'* saving grace. In this event you control a creature capable of taking many different forms and must negotiate an obstacle course. The metamortph can turn itself from a pulsating blob into a runner with superfast legs, into a burrower, into a jumper, and finally into a flyer complete with helicopter blades. Sounds good doesn't it? Trouble is I'm as much in the dark as you because the damn thing wouldn't load. 0 parsecs of fun as far as this one's concerned.

All the same, on the basis of the four fifths I did see I'm sorry to say I couldn't even put *Galactic Games* in the bronze medal class. It's nicely presented and the introductions to the various games will make you laugh, but when you're paying full whack for a game even a multi load, multi event one, you expect a little more and *Galactic Games* doesn't have it. **Ken McMahon**





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▲ Ouch! concertinered by Bambo Dan.

BANGKOK KNIGHTS

64/128
System 3
Price:
£9.99/cass
£14.99/disk

*B*angkok Knights has already been previewed at length in the October ish. Since then the game has undergone much tweaking after System 3 made a fact-finding tour of the flesh-pots of Thailand, accompanied by freebooting journalists and assorted liggers (*Oi! Ex-Ed*).

Such unstinting dedication to the cause of authenticity, and no-expense-spared pandering to the baser desires of computer hacks, will not, of course, influence this reviewer in the slightest. Mainly because the cheap-skates at System 3 didn't invite *me*.

For those of you who've been asleep for the past six months, *Bangkok Knights* is the latest fight simulation from the lads who brought you *International Karate Plus* and *The Last Ninja*. This one is based on the ancient martial art of Thai boxing, one in which the fighters use their footsies as well as their fisties.

The game features eight opponents, controlled either by the computer or by a friend, and they're probably the largest animated characters ever seen in a beat 'em up. As well as kicking the stuffing out of each other, they can also move in eight directions, in and out of the background scenery which scrolls accordingly. So there's scope for some tactical retreats and even some sight-seeing too.

The first four heavies, encountered on cliff-tops, forest paths and amongst the vegetable stalls of a Bangkok marketplace, are amateurs who are not averse to using unconventional tacatics. Dan Fists has got some ninja voodoo up his sleeve, and Bambo Man's got an over-arm piledriver which leaves you crumpled like a concertina. These comical moves are only used occasionally, and don't detract from the overall realism of the combat scenes.

▼ Seconds out for some System 3 sexism. Ding, ding



▼ Haggling over prices in the market.



And if you succeed in defeating this lot (by three knockouts in each five-round fight) you get to cross pinkies with the very best of the Bangkok Knights in the brightly-lit ring of the Lumpini Stadium, kicking off with Siam Sally.

Perhaps surprisingly, there are less joystick fighting moves than you'd expect — eight in all, and two of these are defensive blocking actions. Experienced beat 'em up enthusiasts, who first cut their teeth and snapped their sticks on *Exploding Fist*, will probably find this a doddle, and for wimps there is a 'computer-aided multi-function joystick option' (i.e. cheat mode). This uses only four joystick moves to simulate all the shin kicks, knee blows, jump kicks, elbow blows and the rest, with the computer deciding which is the best move to make from the two available at each joystick position. Opting for this mode won't make any of the fights a pushover, but it does allow you to get to grips with the game right from the start.

The graphics throughout are exquisite, and full of details that you tend to overlook on first play — like the beggar and his cat, the eyes in the undergrowth, the splashing puddles — and there are some nifty dissolves and fade-outs. The sound effects are less impressive: peculiar swishing noises and a strangely mundane Hubbard soundtrack.

Still, *Bangkok Knights* remains a notable achievement.

Bill Scolding

BANGKOK KNIGHTS — DIGITAL POINTS DISPLAY

	1–10
Video	9
Audio	6
Toughness	7
Endurance	8
VFM	8

CU RATING

8

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Tackle the monster at the end of each level.

Rastan

64/128
Ocean
Price:
£8.95/cass
£12.95/disk

Last year's rash of quality coin-ops concentrated for the most part on dedicating consoles to racing machines and imaginative simulations. Their wildfire success meant that most of the ordinary stand up machines were swept aside in the rush for the thrills and spills of supersonic flight or 0-60 acceleration.

There were exceptions. Games like *Rastan Saga* and *R-Type* would have shone if they'd been housed in cabinets constructed from egg boxes and squeezy bottles. Their acquisition for conversion was inevitable, with Ocean swooping for *Rastan* at the height of its popularity.

Students of the arcade machine will remember the Taito game as a kind of scrolling *Barbarian* (without the many tasteless features that made the home computer game so infamous). As with most coin-ops it came with the flimisiest excuse of a story. That's just as well because I don't think I could bear to read a gothic novella about a warrior king pursuing an evil wizard. *Rastan Saga* relies instead on brilliant graphics and gameplay as sharp as a meat cleaver.

The game begins with Rastan, a tanned hunk of royal beef who looks like he could breeze through marines training, set on a mountainside facing an onslaught of wierdos all intent on mounting his knackers on their trophy wall. If he is to make through to the final battle with the evil Karg (a man clearly named after his father's cough) he has to leave behind him a trail of dead gigas, bugs, chimeras, snakes, bats, skeletons and serpents.

There are six sections in all, taking you through a castle and its antechamber before you face the wizard in his guise as a soul-sucking dragon. The action is a typical combination of walking, hacking and jumping around various levels. There are ropes to climb at various points, plus pools of water and lava which you have to negotiate along the way.

As he progresses, Rastan can find new weapons and gain other useful items. *The Shield* reduces damage and *The Mantle* cuts damage by half, while *The Armour* stops all damage for a limited time and *Medicine* replenishes energy. Watch out for the poison though, as it reduces your energy.

Each level has a big nasty waiting for you should you get that far. Horrible grebo-like winged men and serpent-women descend on you. What *Rastan Saga* boils down to is an update of that old classic *Ghosts 'n' Goblins*. The machine is superior in just about every way, but how does the conversion compare?

First impressions aren't too promising, although your Rastan



Nice coloured backgrounds compensate for ugly sprites.

Neatly drawn cloaked figure — the best nasty.



glance at the work on the figure in *Predator* or *Platoon* proves what can be done with some effort. Another irritiating feature is the way in which Rastan floats a couple of millimetres off the ground all the time, for which there seems to be no explanation. Similarly there are number of unnecessary glitches.

Having said this the graphics do improve as you progress into the game, and that razor sharp gameplay is still there. And let me tell you, it's tough. It's also enormous and although some of the backgrounds repeat themselves it represents quite a programming achievement, multi-load or not. The hardest points are not always the big monsters at the end of the level either. Getting past the bug that waits by the water on the first level is nasty and swinging across lava pits on the ropes is a real pig. Fortunately there is a continue play option which make a lot of difference to the playability. Getting sent back to the beginning of a multi-load could have resulted in the computer being lobbed out the window along with an unfortunate staff writer.

Rastan Saga is good entertaining stuff and it'll keep hardened arcade fiends going for a long time. The most recent batch of conversions have been a varied bunch with Ocean's *Combat School* topping the lot. This isn't quite in the same class but its depth makes it a big challenge.

Mike Pattenden

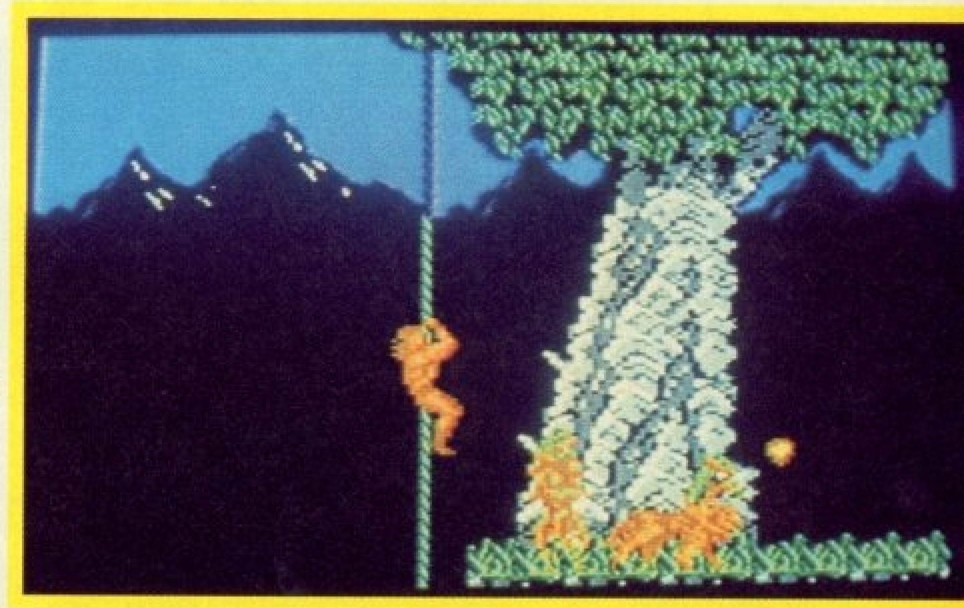
Saga

character is of a reasonable size there is little detail or definition about him. Close inspection reveals a sort of orange puff pastry on his legs and biceps. This is also true of many of the adversaries Rastan meets. They bear only a passing resemblance to their names. A swift



Up a gumtree on level five.

RASTAN SAGA	DIGITAL POINTS DISPLAY (1–10)	CU RATING
Video	7	8
Audio	6	
Toughness	9	
Endurance	8	
VFM	7	

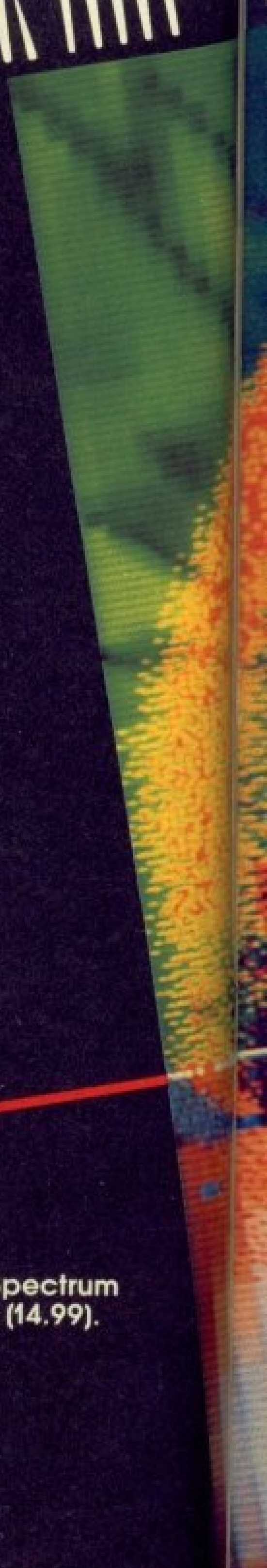


Can you really hit her? You've got to.

SOMETHING HORRIFYING AND INE

SCHWARZENEGGER
PREDAT

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It came for the thrill of the hunt.
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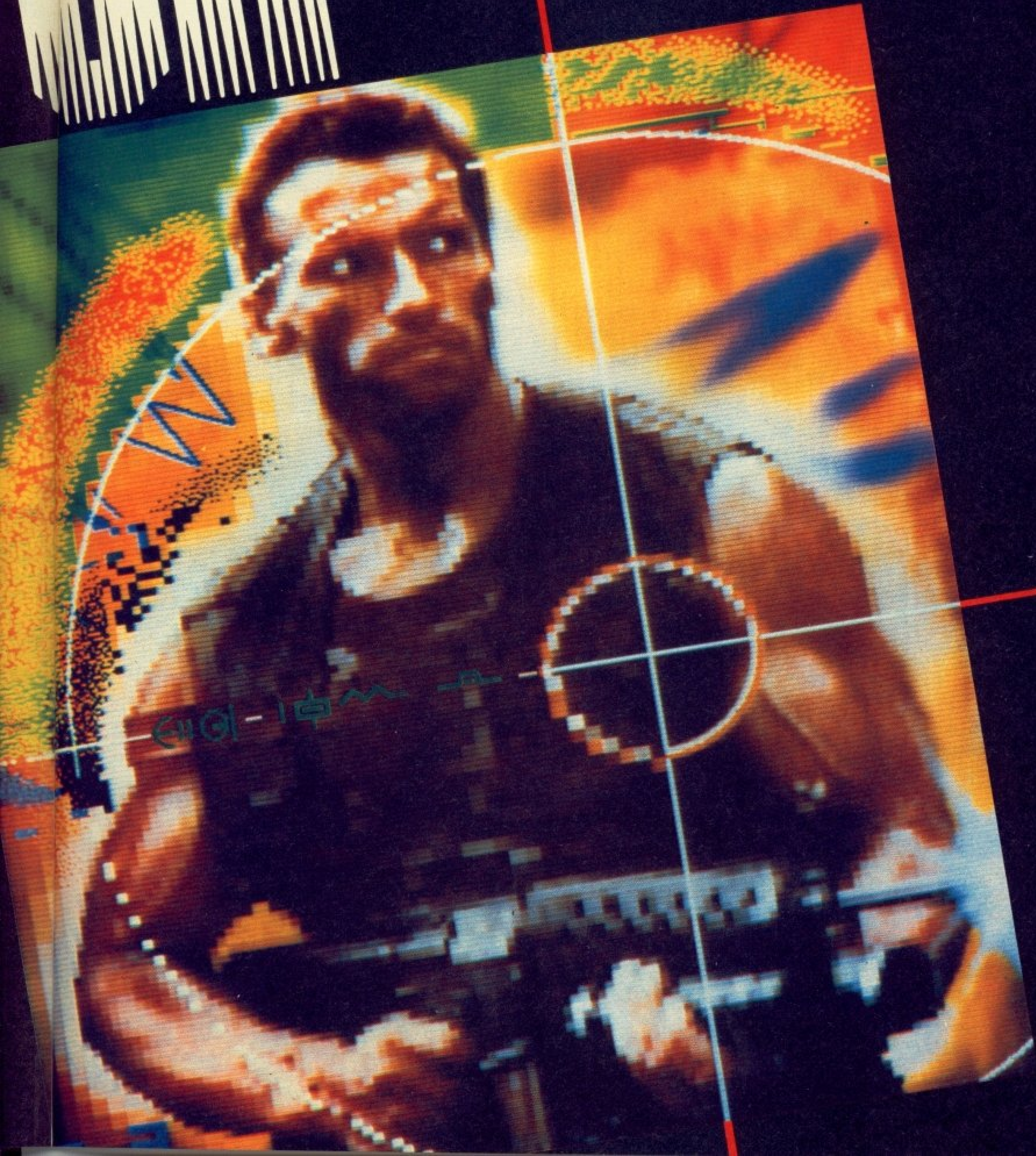
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Game Design Copyright Denton Designs 1986

Screen shots taken from various computer formats

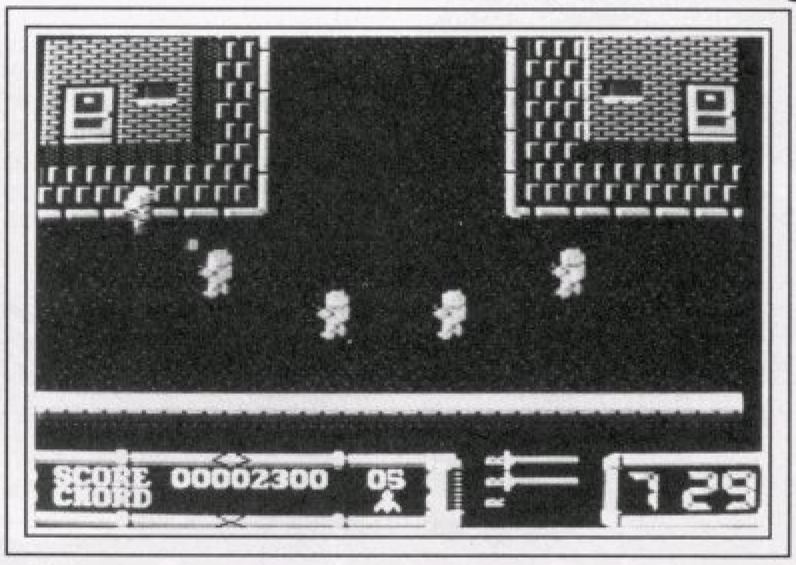


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MASTERS OF THE UNIVERSE

Unlike their last big 'game of the cartoon' deal, MASK, Gremlin's *Masters of the Universe* game is based on the newly released film of the ultimate muscle-bound hero, He-Man, and his eternal run-ins with Skeltor. I haven't seen the film, but if Gremlin's adaptation is anything to go by there isn't much of a plot.

The cosmic key to time travel has slipped through a time vortex and into the hands of an American college student who mistakes it for a musical instrument. Your task as He-Man is to recover the key, before Skeletor and his army, led by Evel-Lyn, can get to it first; if they do, all hell will break loose.

In order to capture the key, you must first discover eight chords which will activate it and return you to your destiny at Castle Greyskull. Some of these can be found in the streets of 'Downtown America' in which most of the game is played.

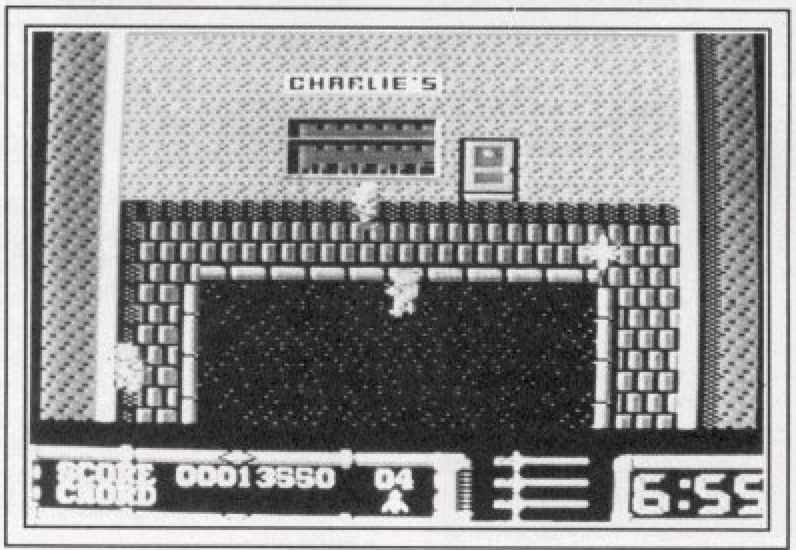
The streets are viewed from above and look remarkably maze-like, but then American streets probably do. When He-Man gets to a junction the whole screen disappears and is replaced by another at 90 degrees to the original. For example, if you decide to turn left at a crossroads, the screen is replaced by another where you must travel straight up to continue in the same direction.

While you worry about which way to turn, hordes of Skeletor's soldiers appear at every corner, firing mercilessly at you. You can of course shoot back, but more and more of them appear to replace the ones you cut down. Running away might be simpler, but this massacre is in fact necessary if you are to collect all of the chords.

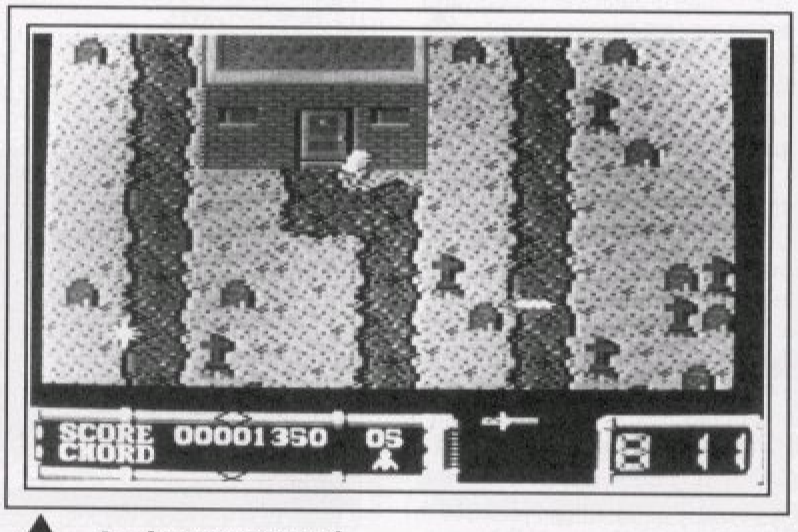
Just when you're getting your eye in, a message appears on the screen from one of your two companions; Teela and Gwildor, telling you that the action's all going on down at the scrapyard. Actually finding your way around Downtown America isn't too difficult as it's not all that big and a map is provided with the game instructions.

On arrival at the scrapyard you get involved in a beat 'em up with two of Skeltor's evil minions, Blade and Karg. As in the rest of the game your energy is depicted on the screen by a sword meter and you have to kick the hell out of the opposition before they do the same to you. There's nothing complicated or difficult about this, and there are in fact only five options – forward, reverse, kick, punch and duck.

Then it's message time again and before you know it you're at Charlie's Electronic Store, having wasted countless minions on the way. This part of the game is a target practice shoot out. The minions run across the screen and appear at doors and windows while you pick 'em off with the cross-hair target. You have to kill quite a few of them before you get the next message which is to head for the rooftops aboard your flying disc.



Outside Charlie's scrapyard.



In the graveyard

This penultimate stage is the most disappointing part of the game, which, it has to be said, goes downhill fast from the moment the first shot is fired. The rooftops didn't look any different from the streets. In fact the only difference is that, being abroad your flying disc, it takes longer to slow down than when you are on foot. There also doesn't seem to be anything to achieve in this part of the game. You shoot about wildly for a minute then automatically go on to the final stage.

This is supposedly the ultimate confrontation. The thing is, unless you have all eight chords it's no confrontation at all – you lose – end of story. If you win? Well I'm afraid it's not much better, you must push Skeletor into a hole in the ground.

Gremlin have obviously not gone all out to make this the toughest game ever, probably so as to make it more appealing for younger He-Man fans. Unfortunately that means there's absolutely no way it will hold any excitement for the seasoned gamer. The real trouble is that it's unimaginative and a bit dull, Gremlin will have to rely on the He-Man name to sell this one.

Ken McMahon

MASTERS OF THE UNIVERSE — *DIGITAL POINTS DISPLAY*

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Video
Audio
Toughness
Endurance
VFM

CU RATING

5



KNI

64/128 Activision Price: £9.99/cass £12.99/disk

Knightmare was one of those TV programmes that kids who get kept in a lot after school never managed to watch. Although it's finished now, a new series is planned soon. Not ones to miss a chance, Activision have bought up the game rights in the hope that if you can't watch it, you'll still want to fork out the ten sovs it takes to play it.

Knightmare, the game, is a curious mixture of adventure and arcade action, which sticks reasonably closely to the fantasy and mystery atmosphere of the TV storyline. You get the bloke in the full facial helmet (complete with pair of horns) wandering around the dungeons of Damonia Castle, picking up objects, casting spells and fighting off various fantastical monsters in order to survive and escape — in that order.

This may sound pretty offputting if, like me, you've always regarded adventuring as one step down the line from train spotting. *Knightmare* avoids being comatose by having pretty nifty graphics animation and text input that consists merely of two words, both chosen from short lists. No keying in to do of stupid sentences. It's simplicity itself to play.

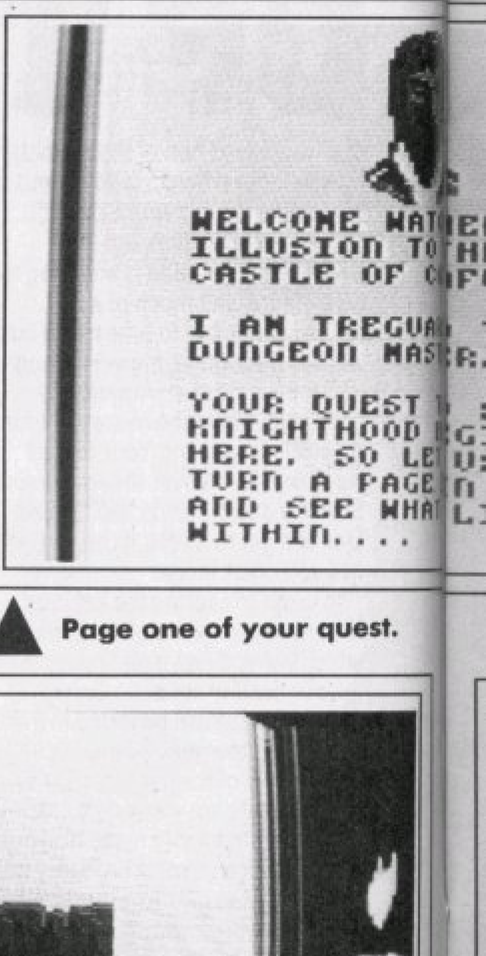
A few preliminary words about the 'arcade' stuff. Don't be fooled. This merely amounts to picking up whatever weapon is available and pressing the firebutton like mad until the adversary sinks into the ground. Hardly quick-reaction combat but it provides nice little interludes.

Now that you know what you're letting yourself in for, on with the story. At the beginning of the game, you're placed into one of the castle dungeons by Treguard the Master of the Dungeons. That's where you find yourself on the first screen, represented cleverly as one page of a book. To the right of the screen you see a large flickering candle which gradually goes down. Now and then a little hot wax runs down the side — neat.

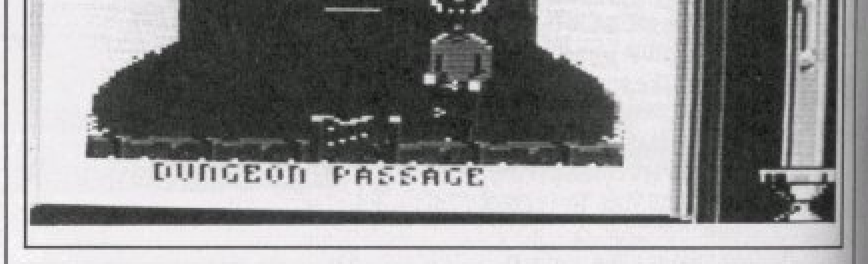
The candle (surprise, surprise) represents life force, which decreases more quickly, too quickly for my liking, when you come into contact with anything nasty. The force is not replenishable. So when the candle snuffs it, so do you.

Since the instructions don't tell you more than they can get away with, the best way to find out what you can and can't do is to flick through the two lists of words. One set is for the actions, whilst the other lists all the objects available.

There is also a set of spells, which you have to work out how to get. Two good ones are the toad and the anvil. The toad turns characters into,



Page one of your quest.



The man with the iron mask (and the roll-neck polo).

er, toads; and the anvil hovers at the top of the screen to be dropped on the heads of unfortunate nasties — heh, heh. Since some doors don't open with the 'open door' command, Caspar the Key is available — if you can find him.

Other spells include a nifty number that temporarily freezes everything; and the alchemy spell, which turns characters into solid gold spheres for you to put in your knapsack as treasure.

Various other items can be picked up and put in the bag, and pressing 'I' gives you an inventory of what you're carrying. Rocks are especially handy for throwing, and so is food (I mean handy, not for throwing) which may persuade some of the characters to help you out. Take the old man who's with you in the first dungeon. A little food and drink and he's ready to spill the beans.

To get help and information, you can call the Oracles. There are two of these and they appear at the top left and right of the screen, their speech appearing in bubbles. The blurb tells you one is good and one is bad. Well, I reckon Runious (one on left) is the good and trustworthy one.

get eaten.

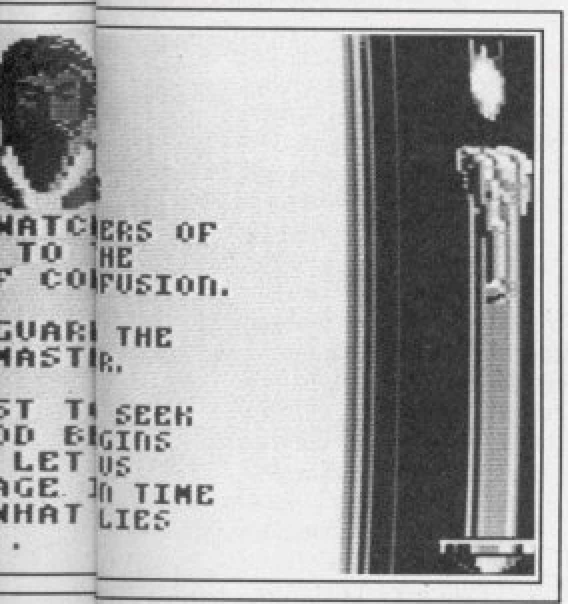
The character in the helmet is always under joystick control, and this combination of using joystick and keyboard gives the game more depth and appeal. There's a great deal of thought gone into it too. For example, inputting a command does not halt the action. So if you're confronted by guards before you've picked up a weapon they won't take a tea-break until you've bashed the appropriate keys. They'll just get right on with their job.

One solution is to leave the room immediately, choose the command

reasonable, the characters themselves are suitably large and gruesome, most of them appearing and disappearing through the floor. In all, the graphic representation is of a high standard and, as you explore, there are always new things to marvel at. Sadly, sound is rather basic, and my version of the game had no title tune.

I enjoyed playing *Knightmare* despite my fear and loathing of anything even remotely connected with adventures (Keith Campbell excepted). *Knightmare* is more a strategy game based on fantasy

GHTMARE



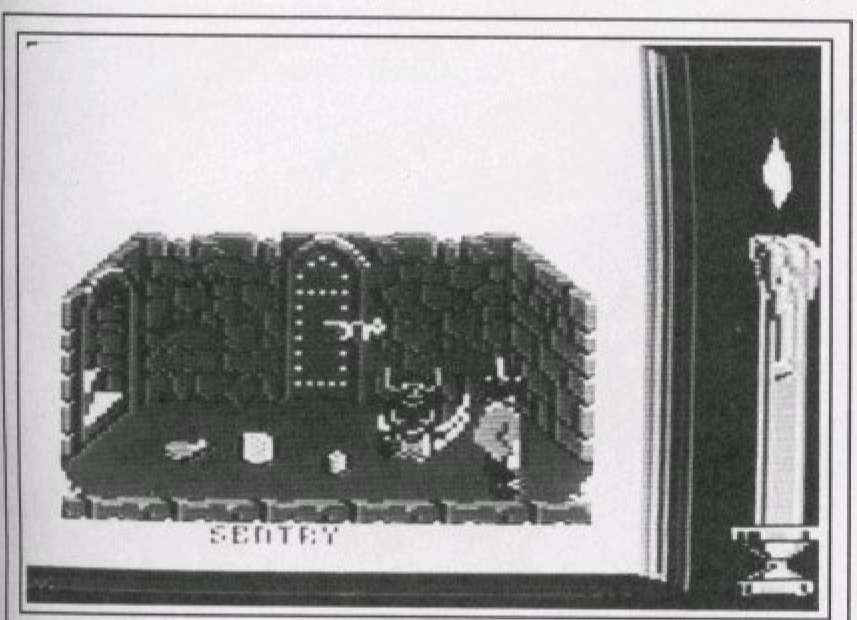
Buggane (one on right) is probably the nasty, due to him bearing a grudge against whoever gave him his name.

Buggane is also the one who makes snide comments. If you input 'open door' when a door is already open, he quips: "perhaps yoiu need your eyes testing". Ouch, tongue like a scouring pad.

Certain inhabitants of the dungeon will confront you with questions or problems to solve before you can make further progress. Get them wrong and it's usually curtains, various nasties appearing from under the floor to make your candle go down. The monster in the wall, for example, tests you with a few tricky multiple-choice questions like: "Where did the Titanic sail from?" Fail and you



▲ **Your starting point in the dungeon.**



▲ **Getting eaten by the wall monster.**

without activating it (the command remains in a bubble until you press return), then re-enter the room containing the weapon and guards. Now simply pressing Return gives you the weapon and a fighting chance.

Although the dungeons themselves are graphically only than an adventure. My only complaint is that the combat intervals could and should have been more challenging.

Knightmare promises to be a big game with more than enough hours of brainbashing to see you through the cold New Year weeks.

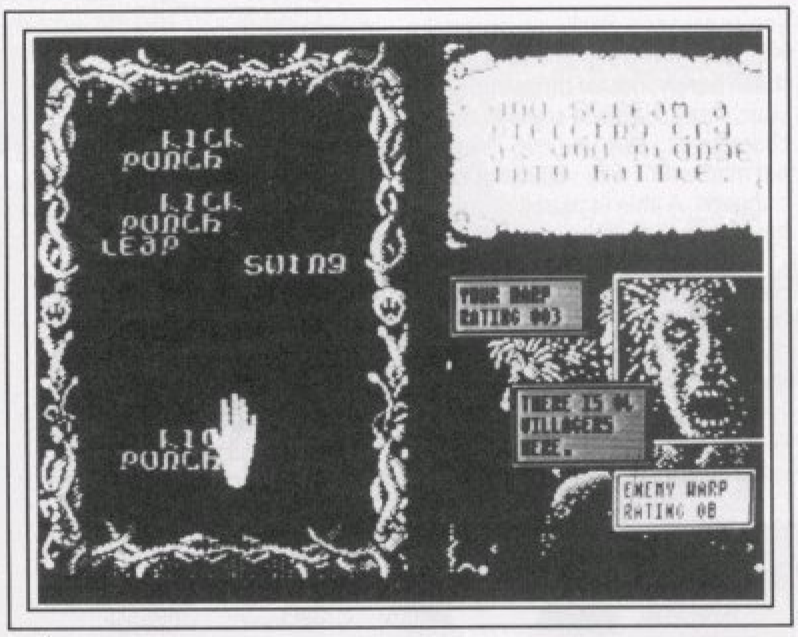
Bohdan Buciak

KNIGHTMARE — DIGITAL POINTS DISPLAY

	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Video	8
Audio	6
Toughness	7
Endurance	8
VFM	8

CU RATING: 8

64/128
Martech
Price: £9.99
cass



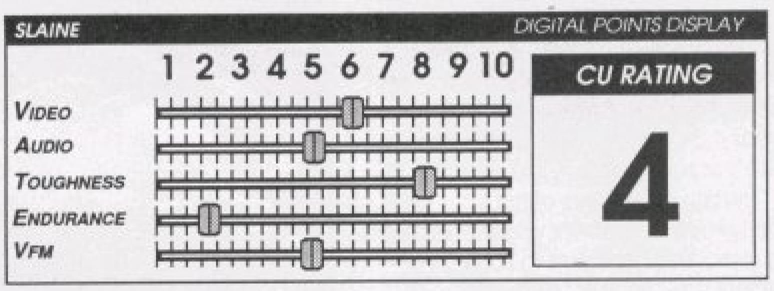
▲ **'Realistic combat it says.'**

SLAINE

Sláine (or Sloyna as various itinerant Irishman round here will tell you it's pronounced) is the latest in a growing procession of strips to be converted from the nation's wowza comic 2000AD.

Those who regularly seek their thrills within the comic's confines will know that Slaine is an ancient Celtic warrior who wanders around Britain with his sidekick, the dwarf Ukko. The stories are a combination of Celtic myth, comic book violence and hippy dippydom. Despite the latter's undertones it is well drawn and scripted. It's not my fave but it warps all over the likes of Bad Company.

Slaine, the game, attempts to stay close to the original strip and this is reinforced by the artwork of Glen Fabry on the packaging and the aid of scriptwriter Pat Mills on the game's text.



The plot is a little vague and so is your task, despite a booklet that comes with it. Basically the land of Lyonesse (an ancient name for Scotland) has fallen under the dark powers of the drune lords and it's Slaine's job to help the Jocks out of the mess they're in.

Wary of the pitfalls of writing another platform game comic licence, Martech have gone for the extra depth involved in playing an interactive graphic adventure. They also claim a new approach to the method of play by trademarking what they call a revolutionary new concept in gameplay called REFLEX(TM). It's probably the most stupid thing ever invented.

The idea sounds nice, it's supposed to mirror the thoughts of Slaine, but in practice all you get is half the screen taken up with a typical set of adventure commands like look, examine, actions, objects, move etc, which slide around the screen at random. The idea is to move a hand that floats around under joystick power and touch them as they appear. The trouble is they come and go so quickly you end up stabbing at thin air and chasing the words round the screen like an idiot. It's a bit like trying to swat a fly. It's nothing like thinking. Occassionally you'll stab the wrong thing and that wastes more time. In fact in an hour's play I managed to visit about fifteen locations which is pretty poor. Put simply REFLEX(TM) is disastrous and detracts so much from the game that it completely discourages play.

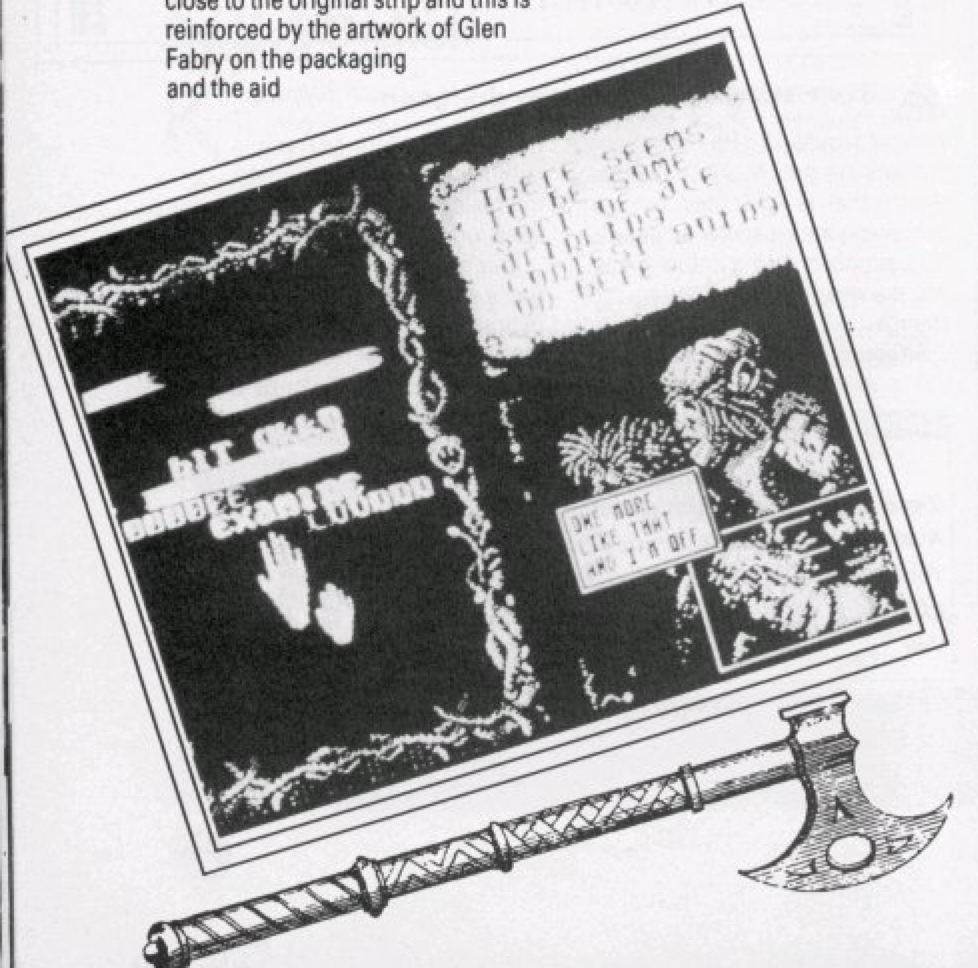
This is also true of the promise of 'realistic combat'. This simply behaves like REFLEX(TM) and a bunch of words concerned with fighting like defend, swing, kick and puch dance around the screens. Ho hum. It normally culminates in you massacring everyone in sight.

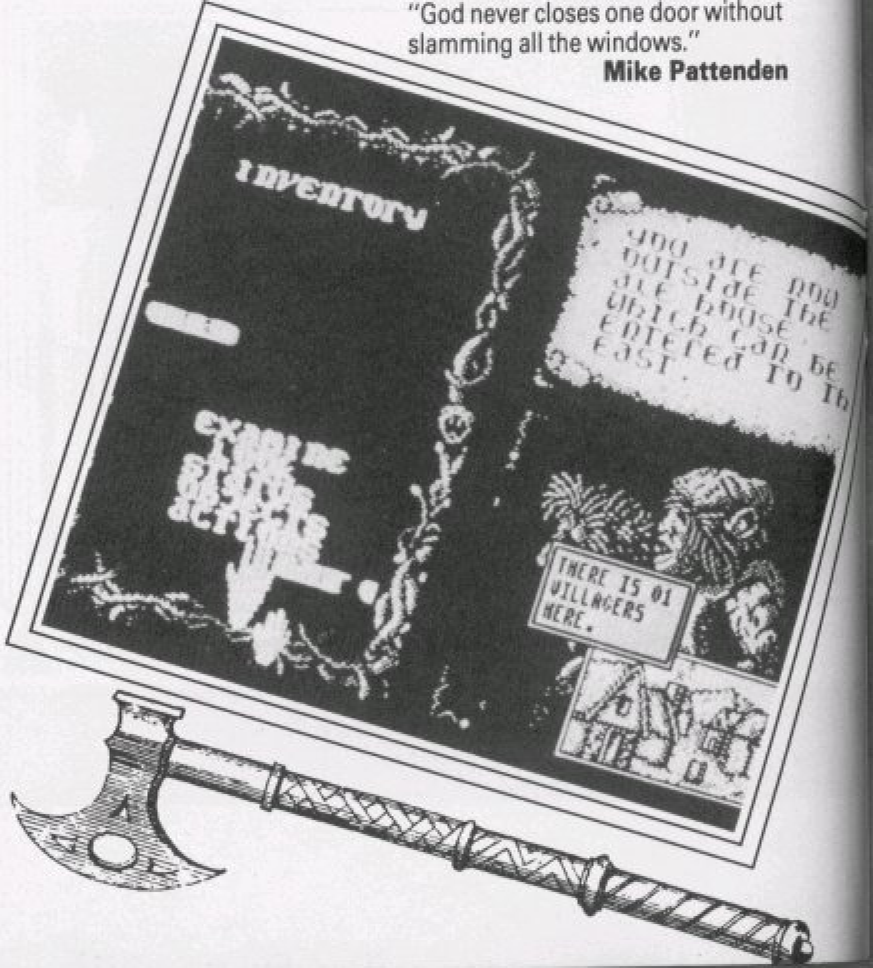
In fact *Slaine* fails to deliver on most of the boasts on the back cover. The action is hardly continuous unless you count a bunch of words ricocheting about the screen action. Nor did I find the graphics 'superb'. They were adequate as was the text, little more.

I'm afraid this all leaves *Slaine* in the average to dire line of comic book conversions. I just hope Piranha don't do such a miserable job on Halo Jones.

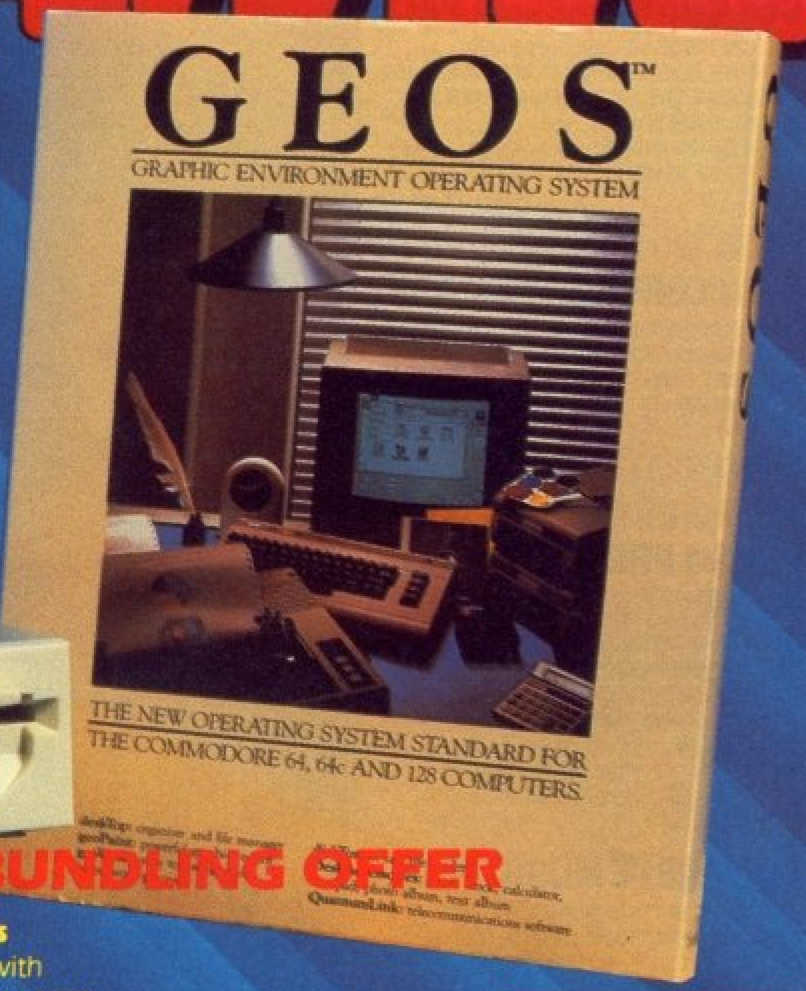
As office Celts are wont to remark, "God never closes one door without slamming all the windows."

Mike Pattenden





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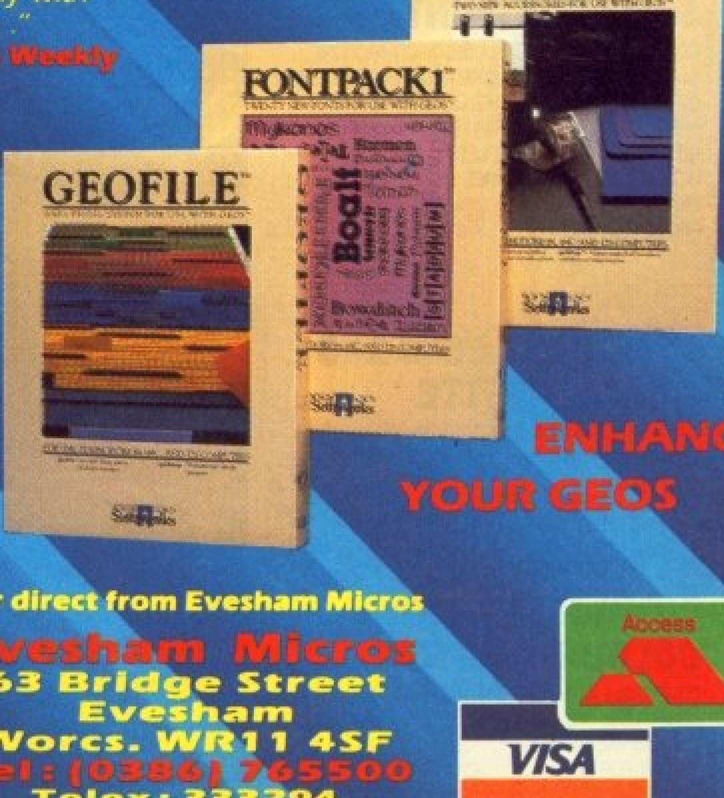
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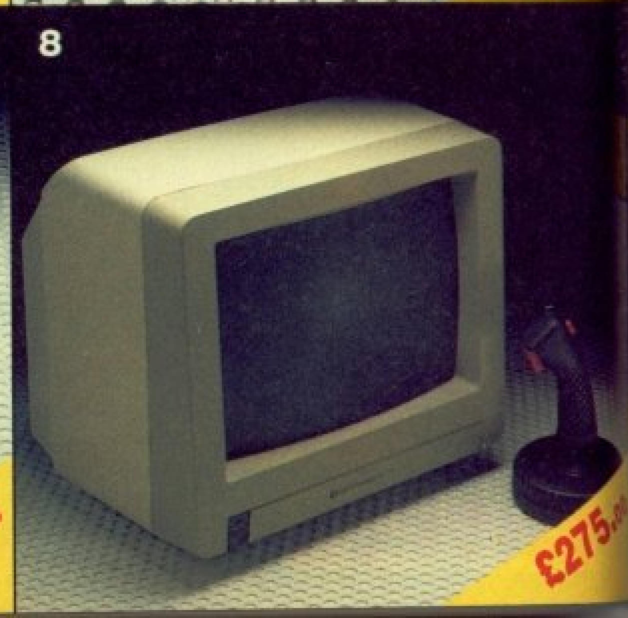












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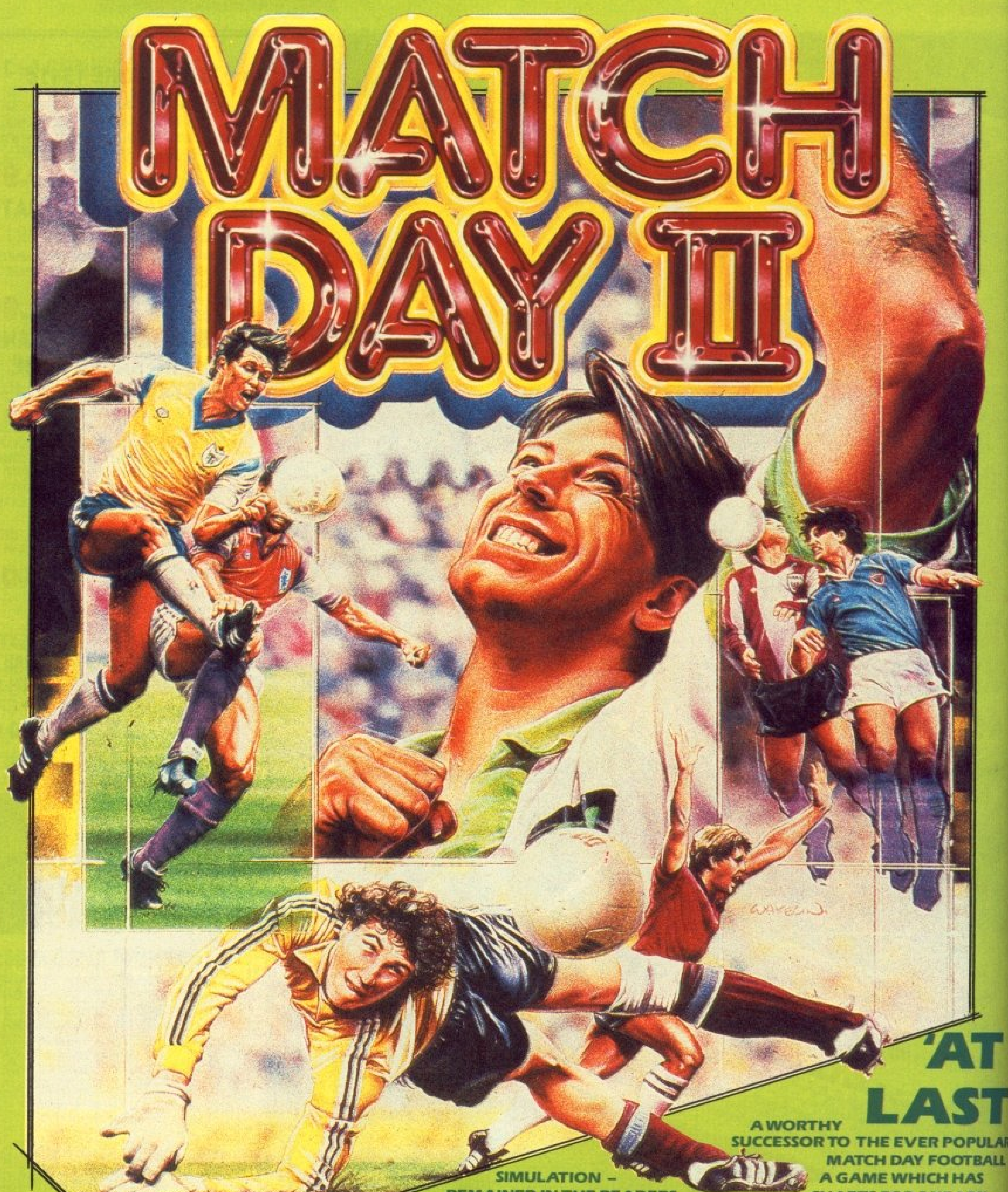
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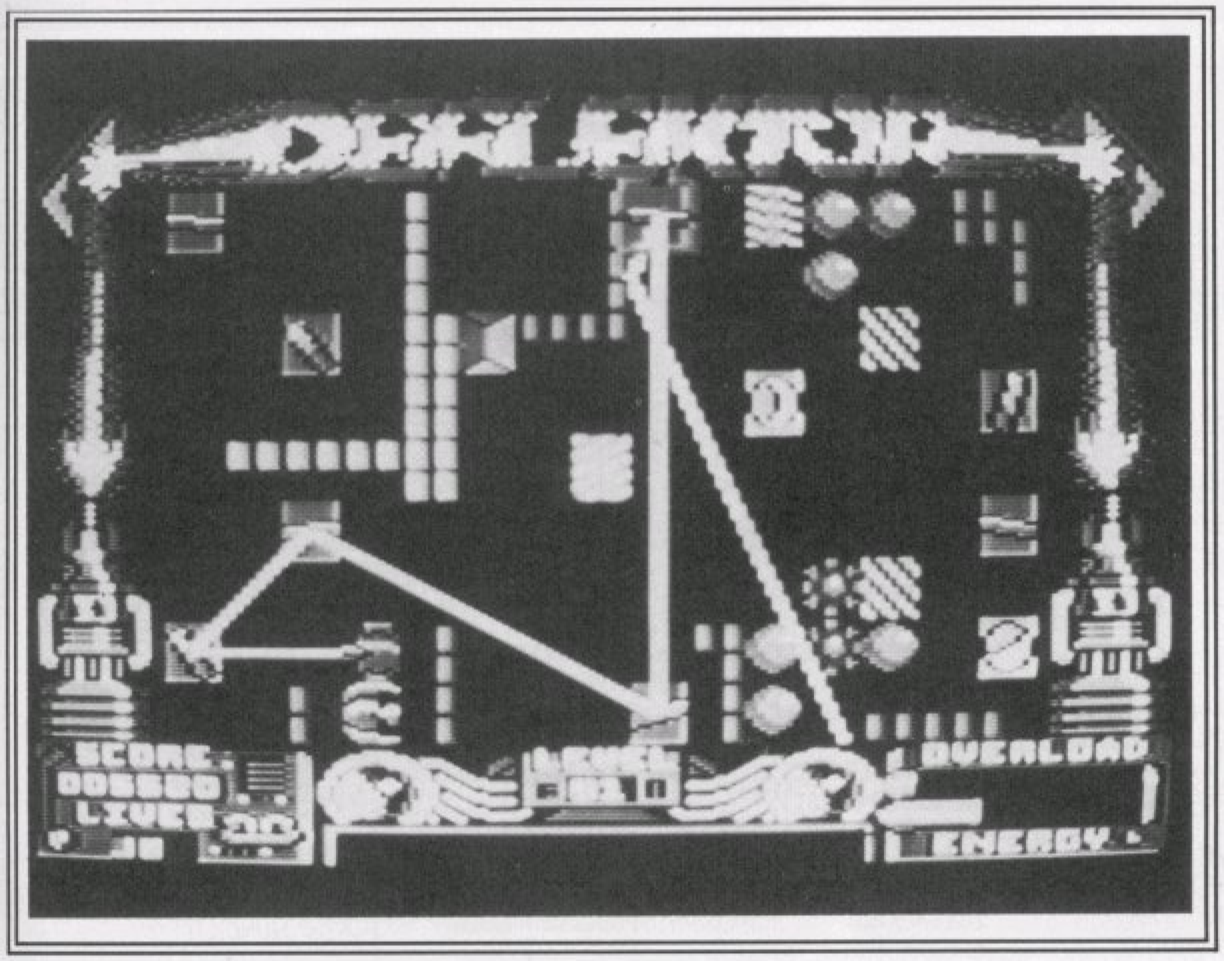
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DEFLEKTOR

DEFLEKTOR DEFLEKTOR DEFLEKTOR DEFLEKTOR DEFLEKTOR DEFLEKTOR DEFLEKTOR DEFLEKTOR DEFLEKTOR

64/128
Gremlin
Price: £9.99/cass £14.99/disk

AAAAAAARGGHHHH!!!!. I hate it! It should be banned. They ought to put a government health warning on it. Don't play *Deflektor* if you value your sanity. I did and look what happened to me. More cunning than Rubik's cube, more mentally stressful than a game of chess, more intellectually demanding than Blind Date, *Deflektor* is tough on the nerves.

Like a lot of things Gremlin do, *Deflektor* is another highly original game, the only thing like it that I can think of is the bit in *Dan Dare* where you have to blast a path to the next level with the laser. Not seen *Dan Dare* huh? Well, let's just say it's like cat's cradle with laser beams instead of string.

To start with there's a laser and to end with there's a receiver. Oddly enough the receiver is right next to the laser. Elsewhere on the screen is an array of fixed mirrors, revolving mirrors, absorbing blocks, reflecting blocks, refractors, polarisers, fibre optics, mines, cells and probably a few things I can't remember. The problem is to get the laser beam to the receiver via this vast array of optical technology. As if that weren't enough in itself, before you can accomplish this amazing trick with mirrors you must first exterminate all of the cells.

That's *what* you do. The difficult part is of course *how*, bearing in mind that you have only limited energy and, therefore, time to think it all out, a lot of which you will initially spend working out what half the things on the screen do. The mirrors are straightforward enough, they reflect. And, as anyone who pays any attention whatsoever to their physics teacher knows, the angle of incidence equals the angle of reflection. Or to put it another way, the beam bounces off the mirrors at exactly the same angle that it hits them. By moving the pivoting mirrors you can bounce the beam to other mirrors and form a light path all over the screen.

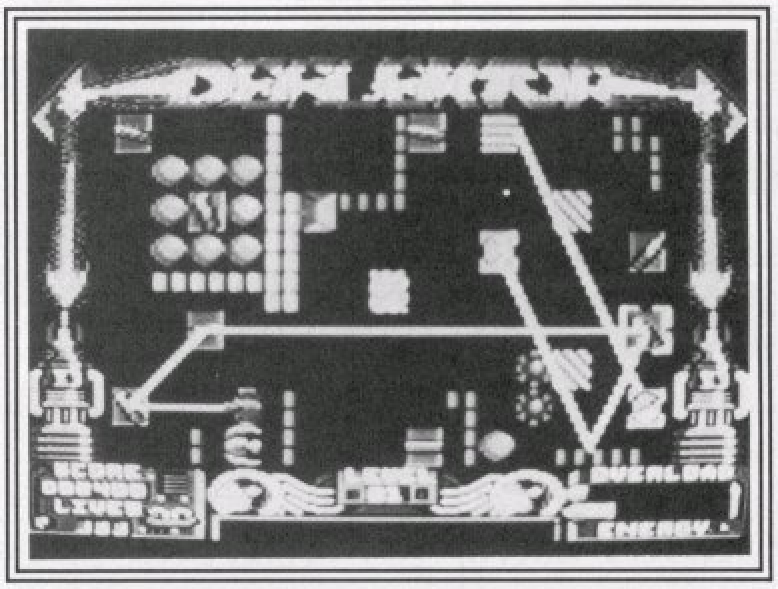
Not all the cells are in direct line of the mirrors though, and you will have to resort to some of the other optical technology available to zap them. The things to avoid are the mines and absorbing blocks which will cause the laser to overload. Total reflection (i.e. reflecting the beam back on itself) also causes overload and if you don't do something about it quick it's meltdown time.

The revolving mirrors are pretty drastic when it comes to destroying cells — they scatter the beam everywhere causing total mayhem. Fibre optics are great for getting into those awkward corners, just send the beam into one fibre optic and it emerges through the other. Polarisers act as gates, allowing the laser light to pass only if they are aligned in a particular direction. Refractors, like the revolving mirrors are excellent tools for random destruction of cells.

Inevitably you find yourself situations where there are only one or two cells remaining. Energy is running low and you're frantically searching for a path to them. Either that or you destroy all the cells only to run out of energy before you can find the route to the receiver. And if you do manage it the next screen it will make your eyes pop out of their sockets.

I know it's a bit late for this sort of thing, but Gremlin get my award for truly wonderful software house of '87. I can't recall the number of times I've had to say really crawly bum lick stuff about their games for no other reason than it's absolutely true. What's more they never pay undisclosed substantial sums of money into my numbered Swiss bank account, not even a bottle of scotch for Christmas. Makes you sick.

Ken McMahon



DEFLEKTOR — *DIGITAL POINTS DISPLAY*

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

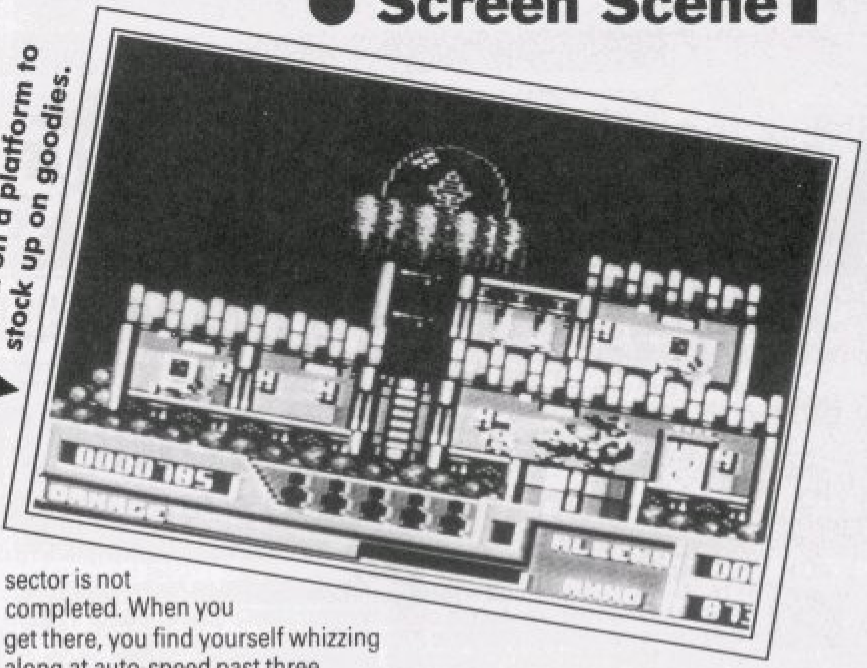
VIDEO
AUDIO
TOUGHNESS
ENDURANCE
VFM

CU RATING

8



Skimming over the surface of Christon 3.



Land on a platform to stock up on goodies.

64/128
The Edge
Price: £9.99/ cass

R.I.S.K.

RISK puts you in charge of a Surface Skimmer which is, in fact, a highly manoeuvrable space vehicle, designed to zap various aliens who have invaded the surface of the planet Christon 3.

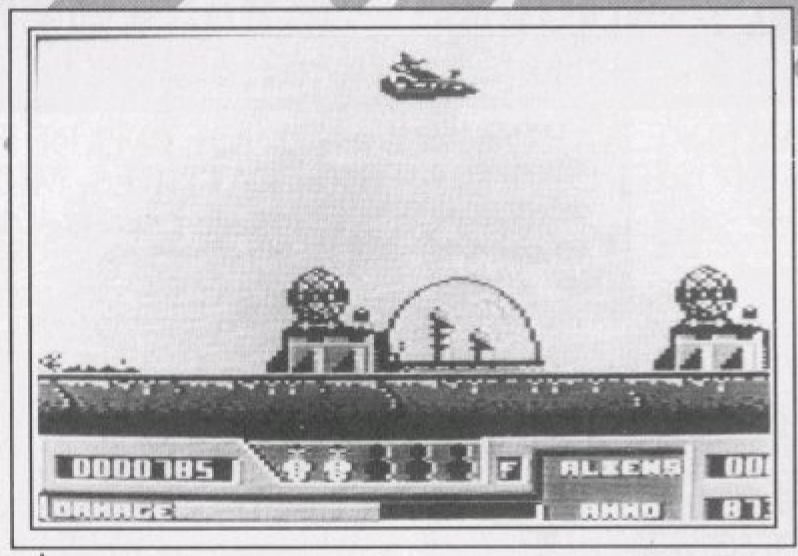
The planet Christon is the site for a vital Space Weapons Research Establishment. When the scientists there found out about the alien invasion they stupidly left their underground base, called the Tube, and are now wandering around in a severely distressed state on the planet's surface.

Your job is not just to pick up as many distressed/working-out scientists as you can, but to rid each of the planet's sectors of aliens. So there you have it, a game that rivals a Bob Monkhouse joke for originality.

Despite all that, *RISK* is a pretty good game. It's a two-way scrolling affair, with two speeds for foreground and background. Your skimmer can fly or travel along the planet surface in either direction. Since it is subject to gravity, not pushing the joystick up makes the craft bump heavily onto the ground. This, not surprisingly, does it no favours and makes the Damagemeter go down. Taking shots from aliens and crashing into them also has the same effect.

There are about 20 sectors to complete, each spanning out from the homebase, which you see in the middle of the map. Sectors don't have to be taken in strict order, the only stipulation is that you choose one adjacent to the one just completed.

How do you complete a sector? Firstly you must dispose of all the aliens (the number to zap is given on the right hand side of the screen).



RISK — smooth if not spectacularly original.

Then you must find one of two gaps in the planet surface. The first takes you to the Workshop (more of that later), whilst the second leads down to The Tube.

You must enter the Tube underneath each sector or that sector is not completed. When you get there, you find yourself whizzing along at auto-speed past three platforms. You must try to land on one of these. The three platforms in The Tube hold the key to this game and need a little explaining. They're also very difficult to land on successfully.

Landing on one of the platforms gives you a choice of stocking up on more ammo, spare parts for your craft or blueprints. All three of these come in handy in the Workshop.

The Workshop is where you customise and repair your ship and you can get there, providing you find the gap in the surface, at any time during your alien zapping. Various icons in the workshop let you repair damage, add more ammo and customise your ship with more weapons and shields.

This is where the scientists and blueprints come in. You can't add more weaponry unless you've picked up enough scientists on the surface and enough blueprints in The Tube for them to get to work. Without them, you're stuck with the basic ship and basic cannon-fire.

Now for the aliens. These come in all shapes and sizes, the basic variety being blokes with jetpacks hovering around in the air. There are also blokes on what look like floating motor scooters, blokes on the surface in bubble cars, jetpack riders with wings, things that walk on the surface etc. Each sector expands on this alien assortment.

But the nasties aren't stupid: the jetpackers fly both ways, hover up and down, dive bomb and generally dodge your clumsy attempts to zap them — clumsy because gravity makes your craft that bit more difficult to control. The further you get from homebase, the more fierce and furious it all becomes. To help you, there's a radar display at the top of the screen and the occasional appearance of supply pods for the mother ship, containing more parts, more ammo or damage repair depending on their colour.

White dots on the radar screen are scientists. It's useful to keep an eye on these since scientists can be accidentally zapped or run over by your ship.

I have two major criticisms of *RISK*. Firstly, there's just not enough variety of scenery on each of the sectors of the planet's surface. On top of that, the scenery elements repeat themselves much too often as they scroll past. This is curious because the opening screen is graphically very impressive.

Secondly, *RISK* just isn't original enough. It's well presented and a sufficiently tough challenge but the scenery, the gameplay and the objectives are remarkably like too many sideways scrolling shoot 'em ups already destined for the Oxfam shop.

Bohdan Buciak

R.I.S.K. — DIGITAL POINTS DISPLAY (scale 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10)

	Score
Video	8
Audio	7
Toughness	8
Endurance	7
VFM	7

CU RATING 7

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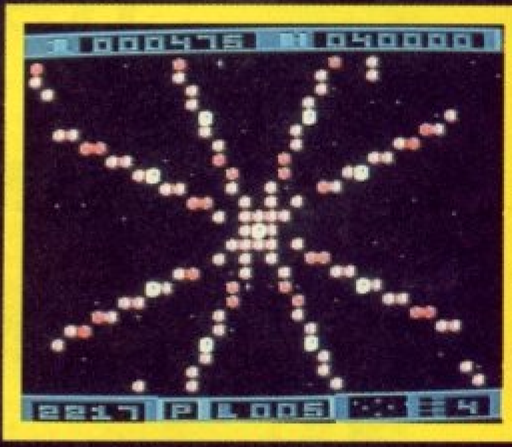
HUNTER'S MOON



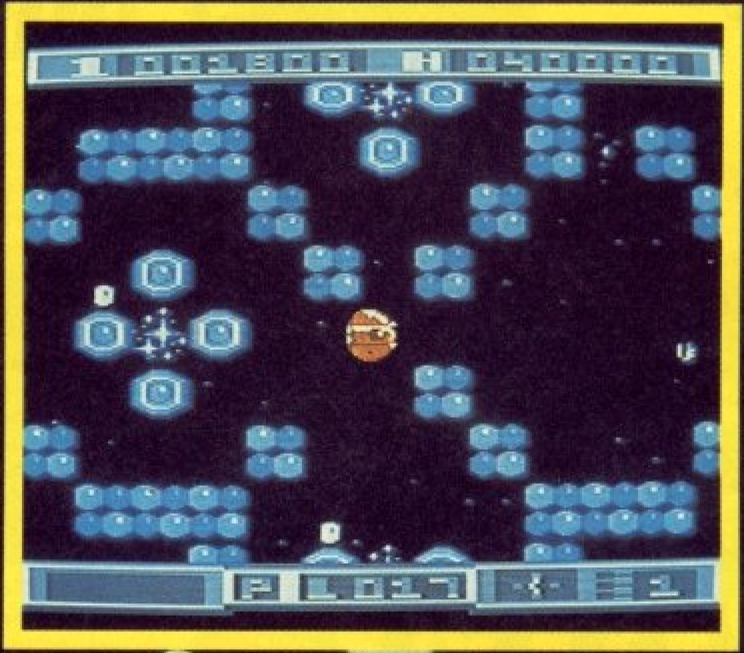
64/128
Thalamus
Price: £9.99/ cass £12.99/disk

With that Helsinki Hex Hero Stavros Fasoulas freezing his knackers off on the Russian border whilst doing National Service, it seems unlikely that he will be writing any more games for Newsfield's software house, Thalamus. Not that they need to lose any sleep over his departure . . . Thalamus's latest production, written by Stavros' successor, Martin Walker, is easily as impressive as their three previous releases.

Taking control of the good ship Hunter, your objective is to conquer 16 Star Systems so you can return home to the eponymous moon. Each system comprises four or more levels, inhabited by indestructable white cells which create crystal cities in their wake. The effect is similar to that in Jeff Minter's *Psychedelia*, only far superior.



▲ **Boldly make pretty patterns**



◀ **Seek out new star systems**

A level is completed by collecting the requisite number of Starcells, varying from one to four. Alternatively, you can accumulate Loopspace co-ordinates by collecting the flashing Starcells (visible on the radar at the bottom of the screen) which appear when you enter a level. If the Starcell is picked up before a timer reaches zero, a Loopspace coordinate is given. Collecting four coordinates completes the system. This means that once you become proficient at negotiating the levels, there's no need to complete all the levels in a system to progress. A considerable touch.

Pausing the game and moving the joystick calls up four options: *Engines*, *Respray*, *Shields* and *Offduty*. There are three engine types to choose from — effectively three different control modes.

HUNTER'S MOON

Retros allow you to stop the ship almost instantly, although it takes a while to get used to the way the Hunter turns before it moves. Cruise control makes the Hunter move inertially, which means it's a lot harder to stop immediately, while the Retros provide continuous thrust, so the ship never stops moving.

The respray option is for purely cosmetic purposes and is somewhat superfluous — unless you get a real kick out of changing the colour of your ship. The shields on the other hand, are far more useful as they protect the Hunter from being damaged by any spores — deadly debris secreted by certain types of crystal. Finally, there's the Offduty mode — very much a *Psychedelia*-inspired affair which allows you to affect the movement patterns of eight Worker Cells and thus create pretty effects.

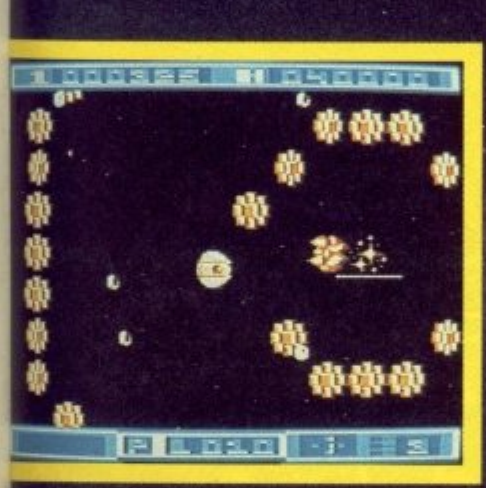
Having completed a system you are given the chance to earn an extra life in a sub-game — by shooting all eight spore-chewing Worker Cells (complete with crystal trails) which move around the Hunter. An extra shield is awarded even if you don't survive the onslaught.

On later levels the Starcells are invisible and can only be seen on the radar. Other problems include Maze-like cities to negotiate, impenetrable crystal walls, and Worker cells which change direction without warning.

Hunter's Moon is a well presented and highly polished piece of software. There isn't exactly a great deal of variety in the graphics and gameplay, but the movement of the Worker cells generates an impressive overall effect which complements the simplistic but mesmeric blasting action. Mr Walker's spot effects are also first class — very clear, effective, and atmospheric. Unlike the uninspiring music which is something of a disappointment by comparison.

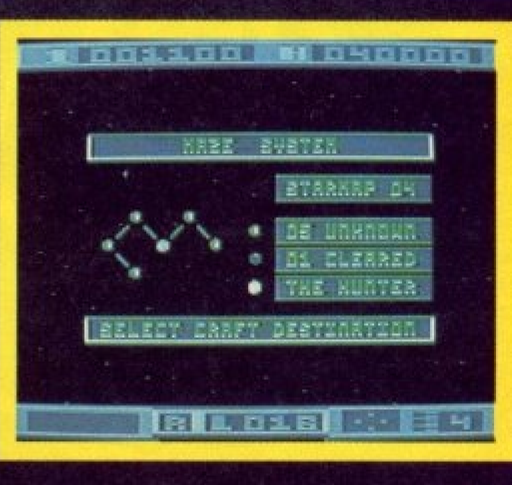
Incidentally, the disk version of *Hunter's Moon* also features five demos, including the cassette loading sequence and four pictures, one with music. They're all fairly mediocre, but who's complaining when they're free?

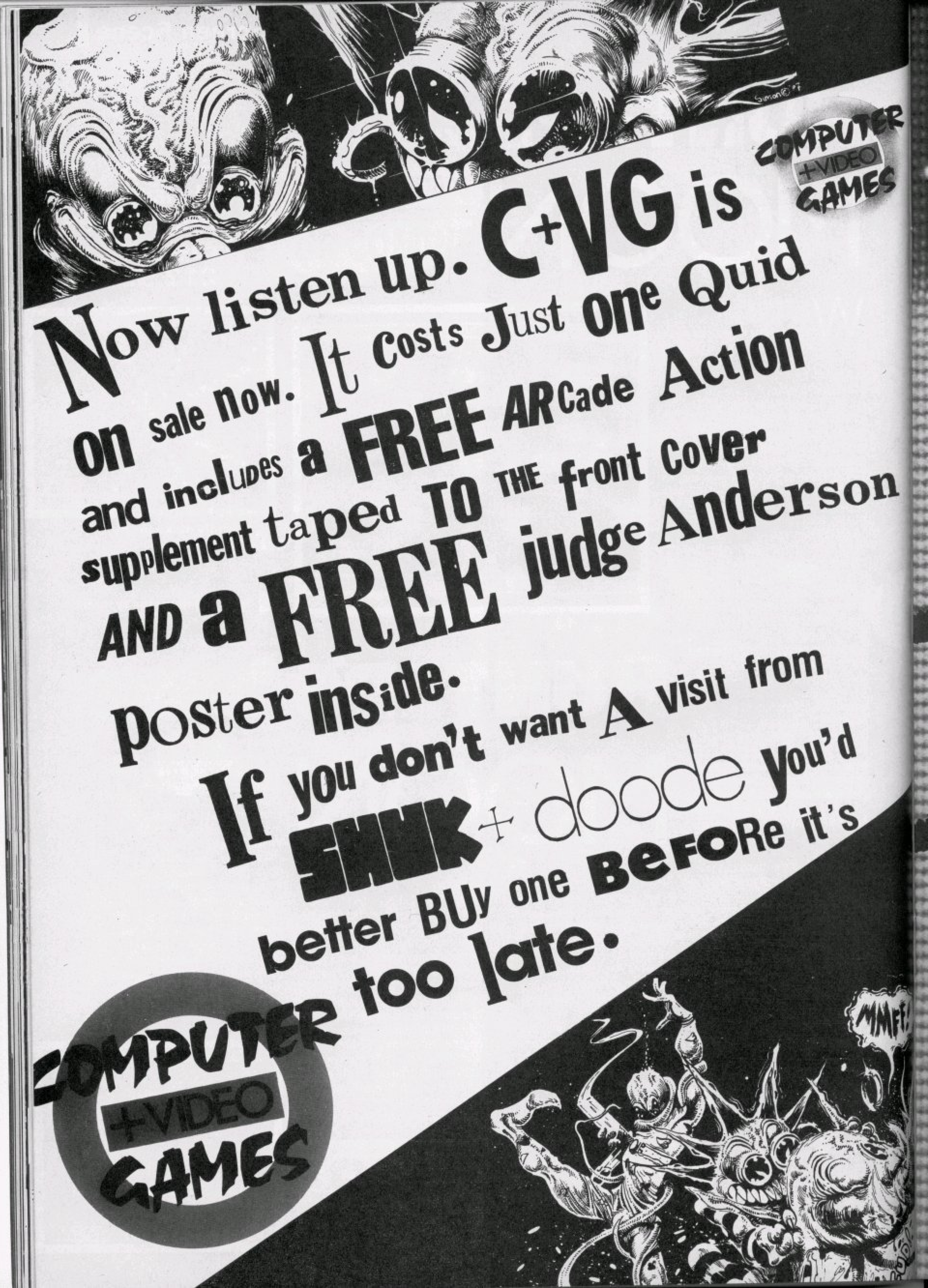
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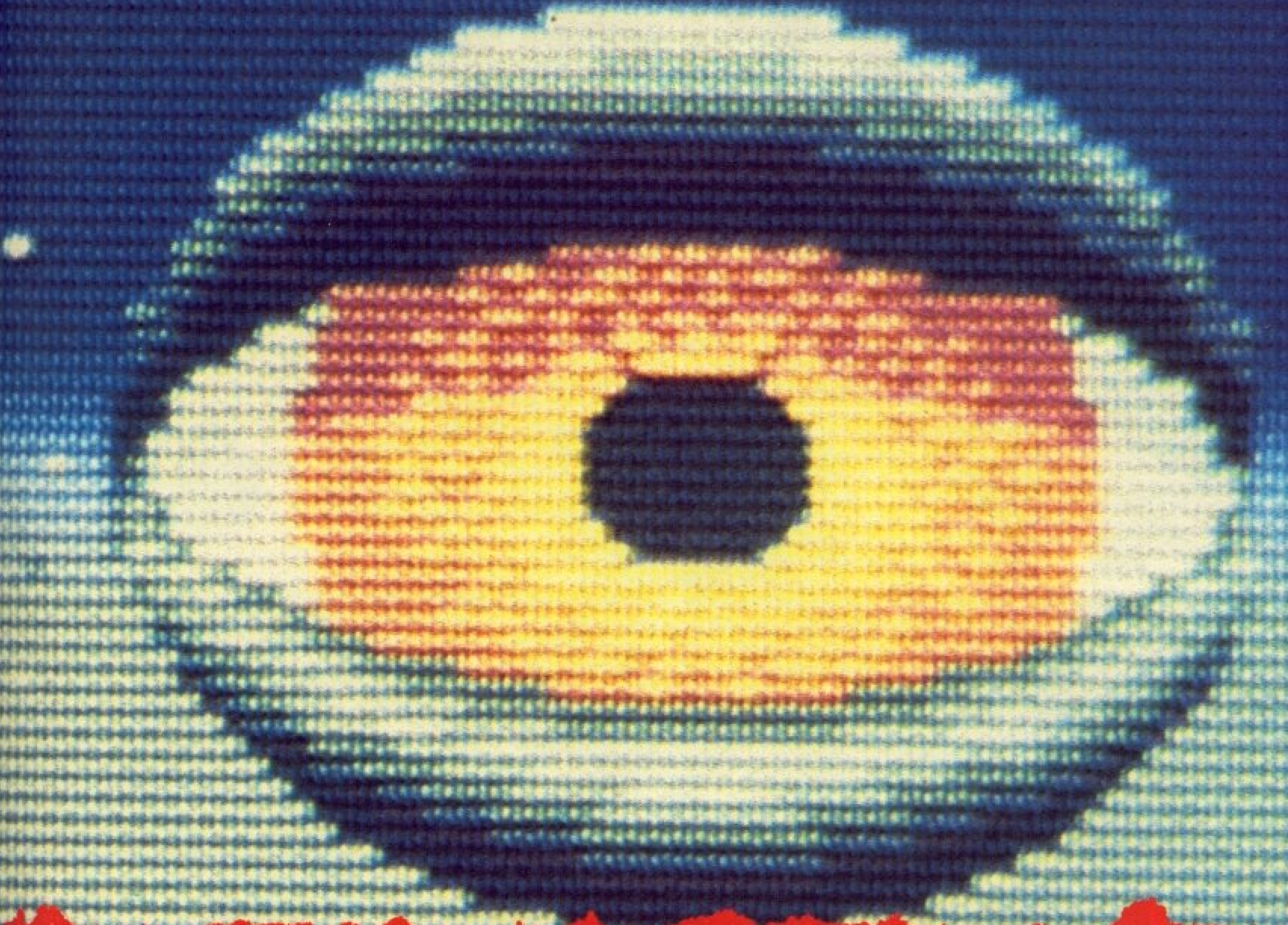


	Rating (1–10)
Graphics	9
Sound	9
Toughness	8
Endurance	8
Value	7

8 Overall




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AMIGA EXTRA

REVIEWED Blackshadow-Gee Bee Air Rally-Xenon

D.PAINT the technicolour dream

BACKLASH the evil eye's on you

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Amiga '88

As the Amiga faces its second year of life, just what lies ahead for it, and for Amiga owners? It would be a foolish software house that ignored its existence entirely, with its tremendous capabilities and possibilities. But how seriously are the big names taking this meanest of machines, and how far are they prepared to commit to it?

Ocean Software have never actually released an Amiga game — but that's all going to change in the very near future. Including *Army Moves* (see Future Shocks), Ocean are releasing no less than six major titles over the next two months, the other five being *Platoon*, *Gryzor*, *Combat School*, *Wizball* and the unheard-of newie, *Eco*, in which you have to work your way up the evolutionary tree, starting out as an insect and mating and eating your way upwards! An Ocean spokesman commented "we feel that we've established ourselves as *the* 8-bit software house — now we want to be known as *the* 16-bit software house too".

There's good news for Amiga owners from Elite because the Midlands company are planning to release everything currently under conversion on the ST. That means you'll be able to play *Buggy Boy*, *Ikari: Warriors*, *Thundercats*, *Paperboy*, *Space Harrier* and *Battleships*. And, added, marketing manager Bernard Dugdale, "It's unlikely we will release a game in the future without putting it on the Amiga."

CRL have products such as the 64 classic *Tau Ceti*, *Academy*, *Black Shadow* (see reviews) and *Ball-Breaker* lined up for release during the next six months. However while CRL say that they "will be producing Amiga software" they won't be "jumping head-first into it", basically because their approach is to pay close attention to the size of the user base, which still has a lot of growing to do.

US Gold certainly haven't been holding back on the Amiga, with arcade conversions like *Rolling Thunder and Bionic Commando* (from US Gold itself) and *Sidearms* and *Badcat* (on their subsidiary Go! label) due out over the coming months, and up to another 25 projected titles provisionally lined up for this year by the two labels. However, US Gold's Richard Tidsall feels that if Commodore want to really capitalise on the Amiga's potential, they'll have to bring the price of the hardware down. Nevertheless, he says, US Gold do "feel that obviously there's a future for the Amiga in the U.K., and that's why we're supplying for it".





▲ **Commodore's marketing manager, Dean Barrett.**

Complaints about the pricing structure for Amiga hardware were fairly universal in fact. **Mirrorsoft**'s Pat Bittern, whose company will be releasing up to ten games for the machine this year, including a Cinemaware product featuring The Three Stooges (due for release in March) said "we're continuing to develop and publish for the Amiga at the same level as the ST. As to who's going to "win the battle" I just don't know. But I think that Commodore need to drop their prices, really, because the machine's current price isn't acceptable to home users".

Some companies, like **Arcana**, are concentrating almost exclusively on Amiga programming and letting their 8-bit releases take a back seat — Arcana will be releasing titles like *Powerplay*, *Mars Cops*,



Crater Wars and *I, Android* over the course of the year.

System 3's *Last Ninja* will be on Amiga in time for this year's PCW Show (September) and "if it's successful", spokesman Tim Best tells us, "Ninja II will follow". The development of software will be slow, he foresees "because it costs so much to develop on the machine, and also, since it's a new machine, initially developing software is going to take a lot of fiddling around".

With their own Arcadia conversions being released on Amiga, **Mastertronic** have certainly got into the market in a big way. And with titles like *Double Dragon* (their recently-acquired licence of the great Taito beat 'em up) and *Lord Of the Rings* due out on their Melbourne House label, who's to say the market won't feel the same way about Mastertronic.

Sim specialists **Microprose** "regard the 16-bit market as a very important because it allows us to show the sophistication of our products. We think the development of the Amiga can only be for the good, so long as the hardware is affordable. During the year all major Microprose products will be on the Amiga". In the next six months we can expect to se Amiga versions of *Silent Service, Gunship* and *Pirates* coming out.

Indie label **Robtek/Diamond Games** have been concentrating heavily on the Amiga over the past nine months basically because they "felt it was obviously a tremendous machine so we wanted to persevere and establish a good name for our products on it. We're committed to it, but like any software producers, I suppose, we'd like to see the price come down. If it does, I think the machine'll be more than a match for the ST". Their latest crop of games features the Amiga's first *Cosmic Causeway/Trailblazer* clone in the shape of the bracing *Starways*.

With most **Rainbird** titles initially being released on Amiga, and increasing numbers of **Firebird** games finding their way onto the system, Telecomsoft would have to be regarded as another major producer for the machine. Among others, the coming months will see the release of the likes of *Starglider II* and *Dick Special* (both on Rainbird and both likely to hit the streets around May), *Bubble Bobble* and *Enlightenment* (Firebird, due for release any day now). But Telecomsoft's Debbie Sillitoe says that "while sales of the machine are picking up, they're going to have to pick up much more, at least in the UK, for any longer term commitment to be made. I think Commodore have got to do a bit more marketing of the Amiga".

Activision will be intending to producing for the Amiga themselves, though to date they've only distributed product from Infocom. According to a spokeswoman they "are looking at developing some of our leading arcade conversions for the Amiga, though obviously 16-bit software takes longer to develop than 8-bit". And with recent signing including *R-Type* and *Afterburner*, their Amiga products may be well worth the wait.

Finally we called recently-appointed **Commodore** marketing manager, Dean Barrett. While he said that Commodore never release sales figures, and therefore could not tell us how many machines were sold over the Christmas period, he was confident about the prospects for '88.

"Things were slow to start off with, a lot of software houses were, quite rightly, cautious about a new machine. But I think once the Amiga got out there and people saw its tremendous graphic capabilities, a lot of software developers got excited by it".

On the prospects of a drop in price, however, he was less optimistic: "At the moment I don't know of any plans to do so. Obviously, though, we're continually reassessing our products and how to make them as competitive as possible".

So there we have it. With an estimated U.K. user base of about 20,000, and all the major software houses writing product, 1988 promises to be a good year for the Amiga and its owners. But with tough competition from the cheaper ST, it won't be all freewheeling for the hottest games machine.

Emulating the Amiga

Suppose you've just upgraded from the 64 to the Amiga — what are you to do with all that old 64 software you've accumulated over the years? Even if you haven't used up almost all your capital actually buying the machine, you're still up against the fact that many 64 games are still not obtainable for the 16-bit machine for love or money. If only, sez you, there were a 64 Emulator available.

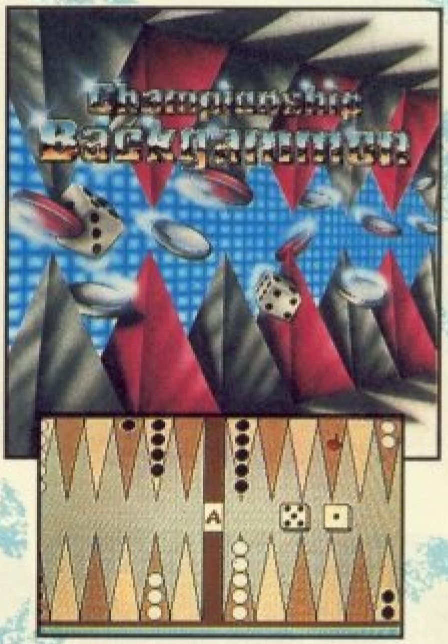
In fact, there is. The first company to attempt to produce one are an American operation by name of Readysoft Inc. Their emulator, which isn't yet available through retail channels in this country, is selling for about $60 across the pond. With the package you get one copy-protected disk, an operating manual and a parallel port adaptor cable which allows you to use a 1541 disk drive.

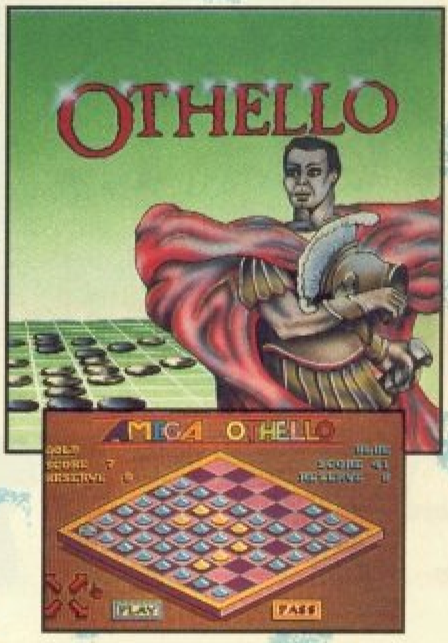
Unfortunately, our technical department (Chris Holmes) informs us that many of the 64's arcade-style games don't run, while others run but at a slower rate (*Bombjack* and *Spindizzy* for example).

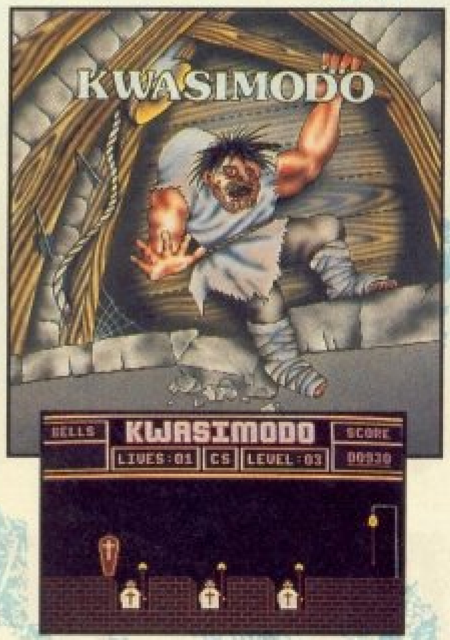
The results with games not requiring quick reactions, however, were far more promising, with both graphic adventures and role-playing games seemingly running well.

So if your bag is arcade games, perhaps you should hold out for something better, or at least wait until Readysoft's emulator is distributed in this country. (Incidentally, Redysoft have promised updates of their product for the future).

But if you're an adventure buff, and you really can't wait, you can drop 'em a line at: Readysoft Inc., 64 Emulator, P.O. Box 1222, Lewistown, New York 14092, USA and get the details.







CHAMPIONSHIP BACKGAMMON

An earlier form of this game was being played thousands of years ago. It has since evolved into an enthralling game in which chance & tactics go hand in hand.

RRP. £9.95

OTHELLO

Othello is an exciting board game. The idea is to try and place your piece so that it outflanks your opponent, creating a horizontal, vertical or diagonal run of opposing pieces.

RRP. £9.95

KWASIMODO

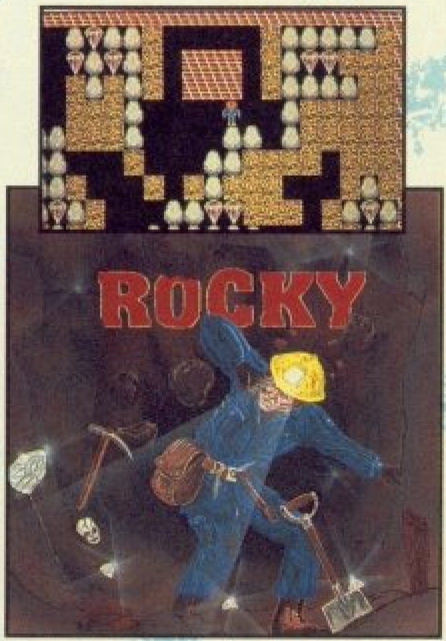
Esmeralda the beautiful virgin is being held prisoner in the wicked warlord's dungeon. Kwasimodo must climb over 25 walls to her. No easy task because behind each wall is a surprise.
RRP. £9.95

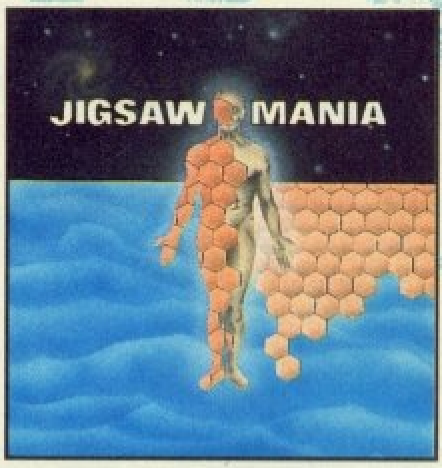
JIGSAW MANIA

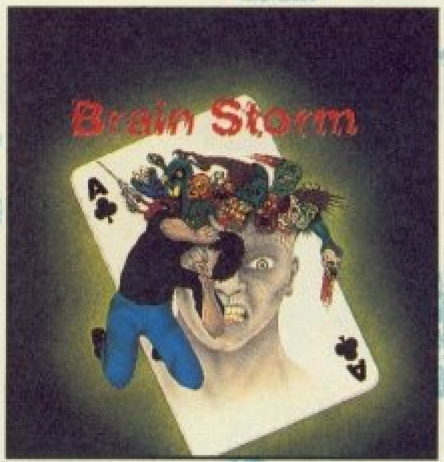
A thrilling computerised board game. Ten different puzzles. Plan on spending many more hours than you had intended to with this game.
RRP. £9.95

BRAIN STORM

A fantastic program that is as educational as it is entertaining. An exciting computerised version of the famous board game ''Memory''! Excellent graphics, sound effects & many options.
RRP. £9.95



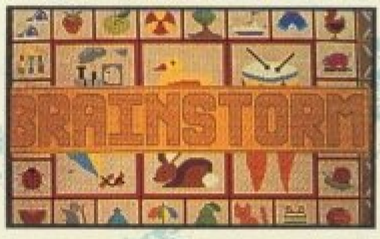




ROCKY

A deceptively simple and strangely addictive game. 20 caves to explore filled with diamonds and surprises. Watch out for crashing rocks and other hazards.
* Free designer construction kit.
RRP. £9.95





KING SIZE

King Size is distributed by Robtek Ltd., Isleworth Business Complex, St. John Road, Isleworth, Middlesex TW7 6NL
Telephone: 01-847 4457



AAARGH!

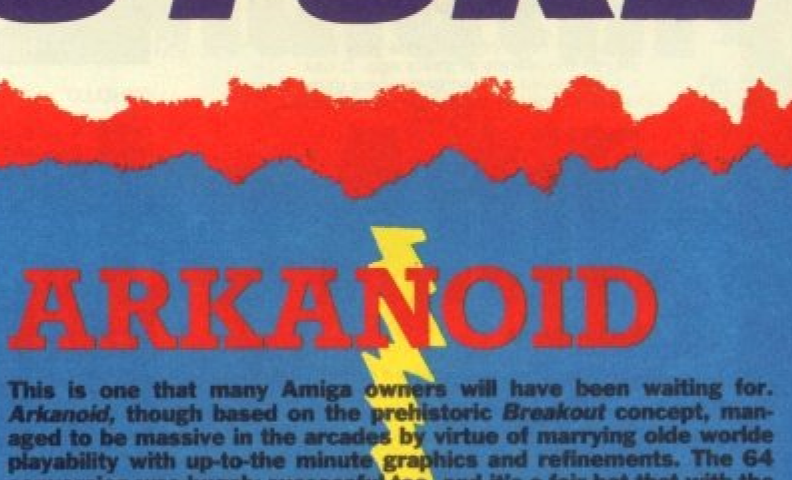
Launched more or less simultaneously on Amiga and coin-op formats, Arcadia's *Aaargh!* bears more than a fleeting resemblance to the recently converted arcade smash *Rampage*. You play either an ogre or a dragon roaming about the hitherto peaceful island of Darance on the hunt for Roc's eggs. These are hidden about the island's various cities, towns and villages and the only way to locate them is, yes, to smash everything into dust. Once you have five eggs, you can then set off for the volcano which houses the final golden egg. Of course, there are scores of other creatures, defenceless and otherwise, to be slaughtered *en route* — not to mention beating off the challenge of your rival monster. Eating most things — from hamburgers to humans — increases your health, and picking up bolts of lightning improves your destructive potential.

AMIGA FUTURE S



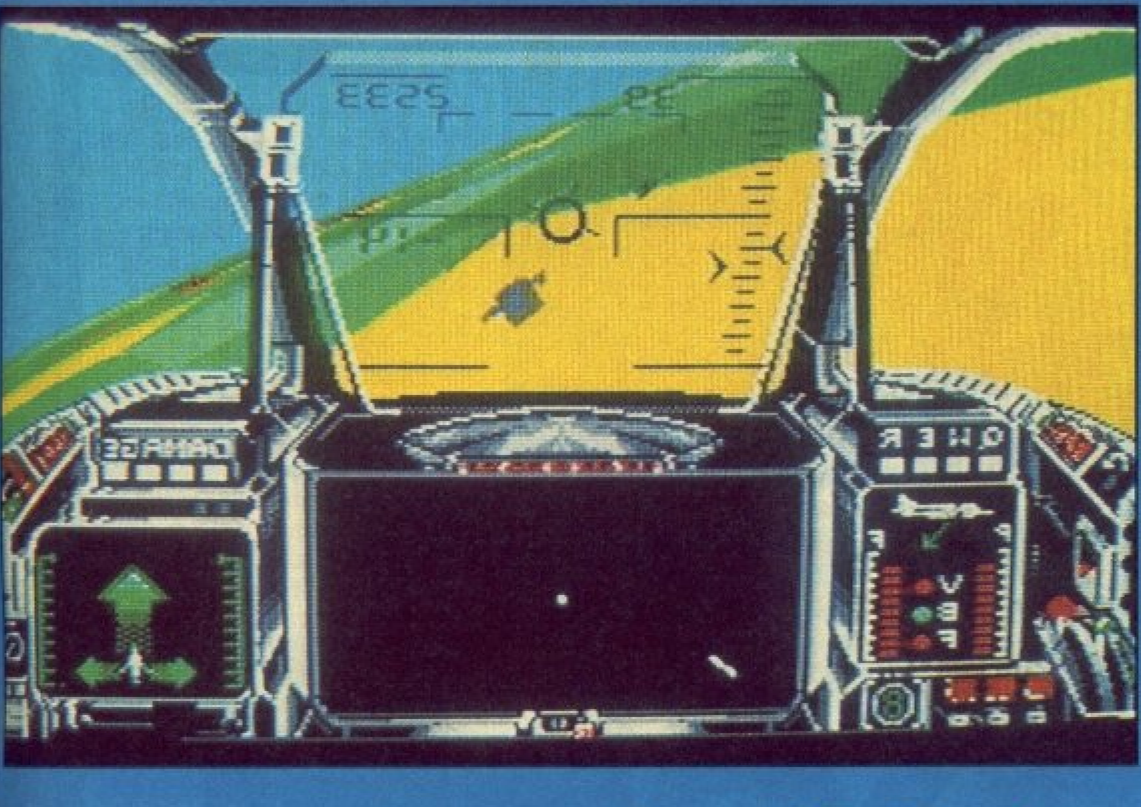
ARKANOID

This is one that many Amiga owners will have been waiting for. *Arkanoid*, though based on the prehistoric *Breakout* concept, managed to be massive in the arcades by virtue of marrying olde worlde playability with up-to-the minute graphics and refinements. The 64 conversion was hugely successful too, and it's a fair bet that with the Amiga's graphic abilities *Arkanoid* will be just as intoxicating, addictive and down right *bad* in this format too. Pictured below is American software house Discovery Software International's version, currently available in this country on import only. This may make it a wee bit pricey, but we've got a feeling there'll be quite a few punters who'll be happy to dig that bit deeper in order to acquire it.



AQUAVENTURA

Scouse soft-merchants Psygnosis have been writing games for the Amiga practically ever since Commodore launched the machine, and can fairly be described as one of the most experienced Amiga houses. So when they claim that their latest product "uses the Amiga to its fullest", you can at least be sure that they, of all people, would know just how "full" that is. And, from what we've seen of *Aquaventura*, we have a slight suspicion that their boast may not be an idle one. Yup, it does look pretty fab from where we're sitting. You've got to fly over five successive 3-D water-covered worlds, taking out all the flying saucers and (amazing) segmented wormcreatures that you encounter, then dive beneath the surface of the waves and locate the submerged entrance to the tunnel which connects the world you're in to the next one. If you can then make your way unscathed through the nasty-infested tube, you'll eventually pop out into a fresh location, with still more creatures to take on. Fast, furious and fab-looking, it all looks to us — you'll be able to decide for yourselves come March.



STRIKE FORCE HARRIER

Zooming in to stake its claim as the hottest flight combat sim yet on the Amiga is Mirrorsoft's conversion of the excellent 64 game, *Strike Force Harrier*. You'll sit yourself down in the cockpit of Britain's famous VTOL (Vertical Take-Off and Landing) fighter, with a cannon, bombs and the dead nifty Sidewinder heat-seeking missiles at your fingertips. Your mission? To bomb the enemy HQ while defending yourself and your ground sites and forces from receiving a dose of the same medicine from the equally-well equipped opposition. There are two play modes (practice and combat) and three skill levels (pilot, commander and ace) to choose from and at the end of each mission your performance is assessed on the basis of how close you've managed to get to the enemy HQ. Pip, pip.

SHOCK PREVIEW

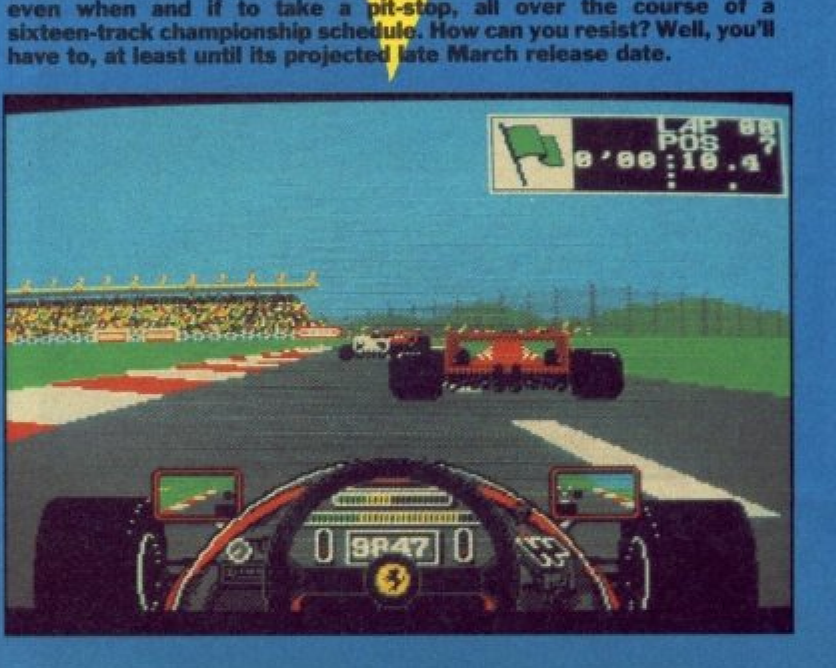


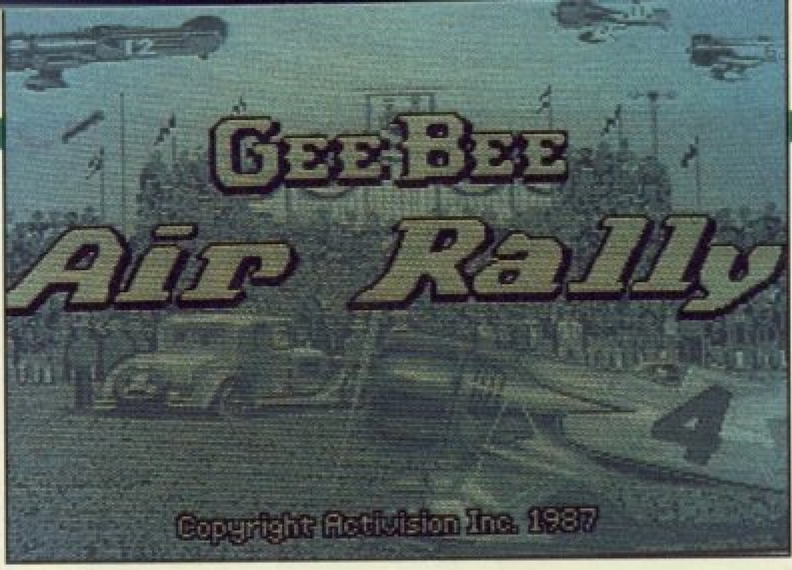
FERRARI FORMULA ONE

Some people want to be president of the United States. Some people dream of a date with Kim Bassinger. And we even know as few people whose idea of heaven would be to be Mark Knopfler. But the truth is that the vast majority of persons in the cosmoverse have one fantasy above all these: to drive a Ferrari F1/86. And so it came to pass that those crafty folk at Electronic Arts decided to capitalise on this almost universal weakness and relase an omigosh driving sim which would allow Joe and Cecelia Public the chance to experience the thrills and spills of powering one of these bright red dream mamchines around the world's great race tracks (Monaco, Detroit, Monza and Brands Hatch) against all-comers. Apart from offering the sheer unadulterated challenge of high speed racing, *Ferrari Formula One* also allows you to choose length of course, how best to maintain your car, and even when and if to take a pit-stop, all over the course of a sixteen-track championship schedule. How can you resist? Well, you'll have to, at least until its projected late March release date.

ARMY MOVES

Spanish software house Dinamic are responsible for *Army Moves*, which should be hitting your local softshop's shelves any day now, under a distribution arrangement with Ocean. You play a member of SOC (the Special Operations Corps), an elite group of specialist commandos. You're involved in some very serious conflict with some utterly despicable foe who just happens to have some incredibly vital documents which will decide the whole outcome of your disagreement. So all you have to do is to travel through enemy-infested jungles and deserts, in a variety of different vehicles (including helicopters, jeeps, tanks and, of course, shank's pony) blasting everything in sight until you finally get to the HQ, break the safe, win the war and live happily every after. Easy, really.





AMIGA

Activision
Amiga
Price: £19.99

GEE BEE AIR RALLY

Gee Bee Air Rally is set in the mid-twenties when planes were a fairly new invention and air races had just come into the public eye as an enjoyable Sunday out in which the kids thought it was a real treat for them, but in fact it was their fathers who really wanted to see the planes in action. The only way that I can possibly describe this game is *Pole Position* in a plane (sounds good eh).

The game gives you three levels of play, Beginner, Expert and Ace. The only difference between them is the speed of the game itself. The higher the level, the faster it gets until you either have to slow down or lose control of the plane.

If you can successfully complete three races then you go forward to one of the two special events. In the first, your task to is to fly at high speed popping thirty balloons in a time limit of one minute and forty seconds with the nose of your plane. as if that isn't hard enough you've got other planes trying to knock you away.

In the second special events you are required to fly right of the red pylons and left of the blue ones, with a time limit and again with other planes trying to knock you off course. If your vicious opponents succeed in hitting you three times, the plane will go into a swan dive and you will parachute down to safety either landing in a pig sty, in the desert with a buffalo's skull beside you or even in some manure with a lady with sexy legs standing above you.

The graphics are designed to a very high standard but sometimes lack those details which make the game more real. For example, it looks like there's nothing below you on either side of you except red and blue pylons which guide you along the route. The scrolling is the same as most car racing games; when you turn left the background moves to the right but I must say that it does seem to jerk a bit. There are only three backdrops unfortunately, one of which is fairground.

On the whole, the sound is not up to the same standard of the rest of the game. However having said that, the music at the beginning and end of the game is superbly done and fits in well with the atmosphere of the game. The sound of the engine is a very irritating buzz, and when the engine conks out it sounds more like a car stalling than a plane. I must say that when the pilot bails out the sound of the wind and then the almighty crash sounds more like what the Amiga can handle.

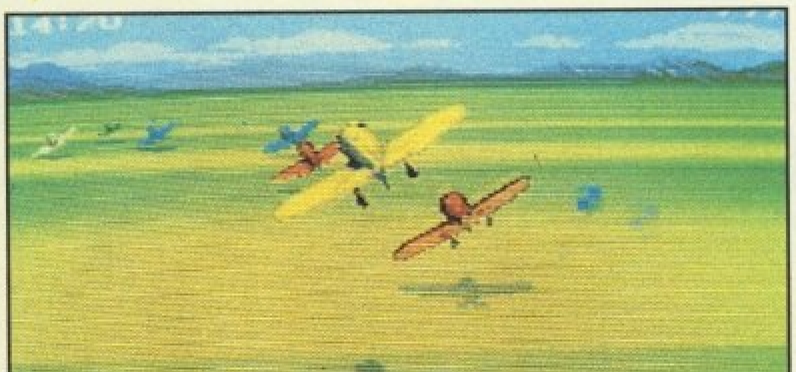
I think this game would appeal to a wide range of Amiga owners. The graphics aren't the best on the Amiga, nor is the sound but the addictiveness and enjoyment that comes out of this game puts it in my Amiga top ten. **Vipul Kapadia**

GEEBEE AIR RALLY

	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
VIDEO	8
AUDIO	6
TOUGHNESS	8
ENDURANCE	9
VFM	9

CU RATING **8**





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AMIGA



Level one and tankin' it.

XENON

Xenon
Amiga
Melbourne House
Price: £19.99

You'd think if a company had constructed the baadest original shoot'em up anyone's seen for ages they wouldn't want to go and package it up with a load of drivel about ...tion fighters, starfleets and ...cial pseudo-acceleration. ..., the resident naffo sci-fi freak .. Melbourne House had to have their bit of waffle. Philip K Dick they ain't.

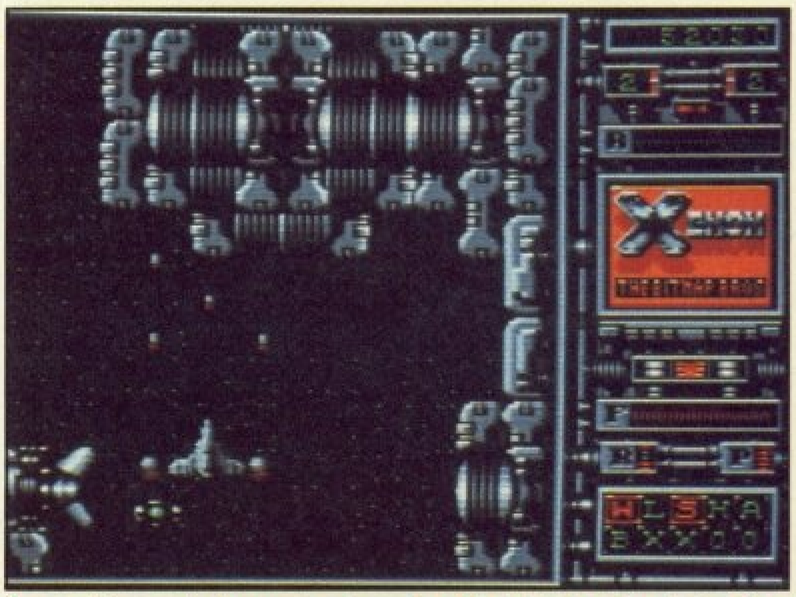
Good job I junked the instructions and dived straight into the game otherwise I might have been seriously put off what is a near arcade quality piece of blasting. Xenon is a vertically scrolling shoot 'em up with play much like an inverted *R-Type*, and it's converted from their own Arcadia machine.

You have four levels divided into four sectors. The object naturally is to make it to the end. You can play as two different types of craft, a land based tank or a fighter aircraft. To get anywhere at all in the game you'll have to switch between the two. You'll also have to pick up the multitude of extra weapons and add-ons that shooting various gun emplacements along the route will reveal. It's one of those games which gives you a dozen different kinds of firepower when you hit the fire button. Naturally it results in some fairly serious destruction.

That's not to say you become invincible. The amount of flak from gun emplacements and alien ships is massive. Each time you get hit you use up fuel restoring your shields. Collisions result in more drastic energy loss.

Each section also has a sentinel, which is basically one big mutha who pops up half way through a level and another even bigger one which appears at the end. These also seem to sap all your weaponry so you end up firing pathetic little shells at this monster. You'll have to stay well out of its way and pour masses of fire at it before it starts to glow and explodes.

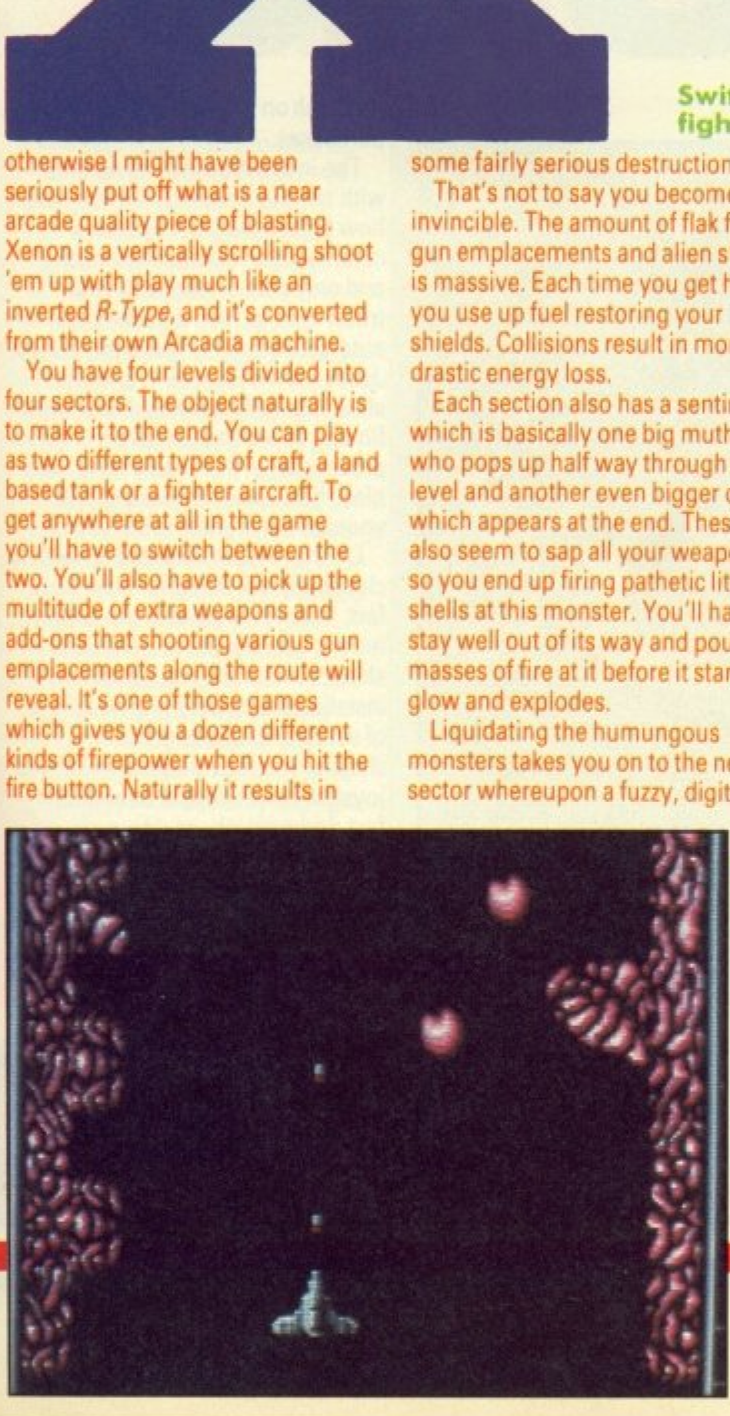
Liquidating the humungous monsters takes you on to the next sector whereupon a fuzzy, digitised figure will appear in the corner of the screen and mutter the words "Sector Two". If they were going to have speech they should have made more of it.



Switch to fighter.

The first sector is a futuristic landscape of domes and tiled squares. Section two is pure flying as you avoid the wall at the side. It's back to switching between ships for the third level which is similar to the first. Finally it's back to the aircraft to complete the last part.

Xenon is one of the best shoot 'em ups to appear yet on the Amiga. Don't be put off by its slowness at the start because it speeds up (it's much quicker than the ST version anyway) pretty drastically and you'll find the screen is cluttered with all manner of flying objects. A class blast. **Mike Pattenden**

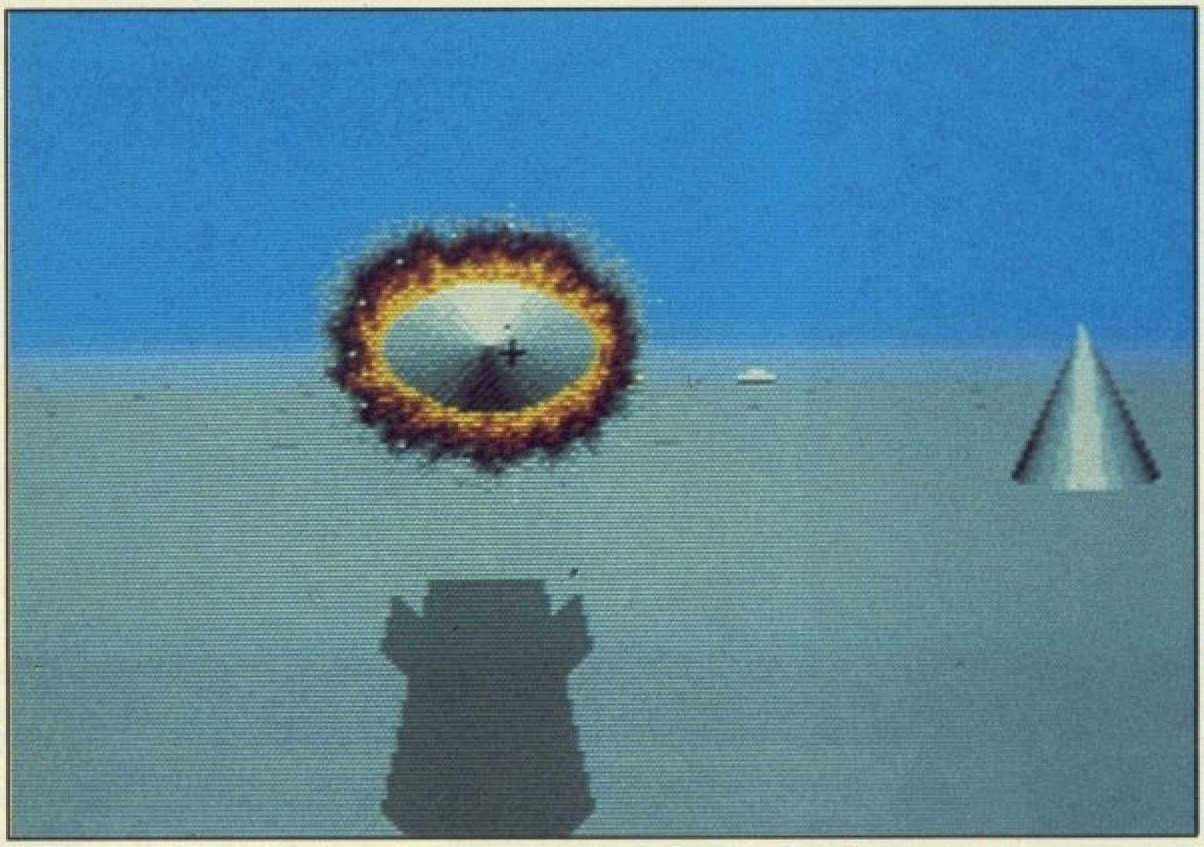


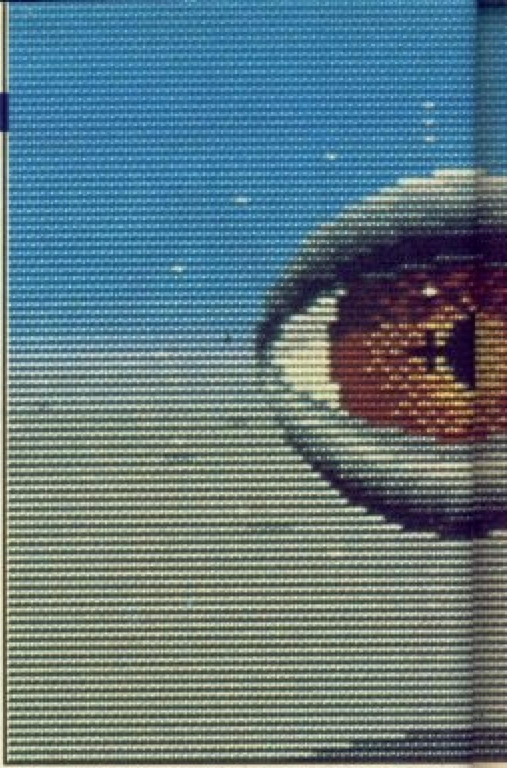
Watch the sides.

XENON — DIGITAL POINTS DISPLAY

	Rating (1–10)
Video	8
Audio	7
Toughness	8
Endurance	8
Vfm	7

CU RATING: 8





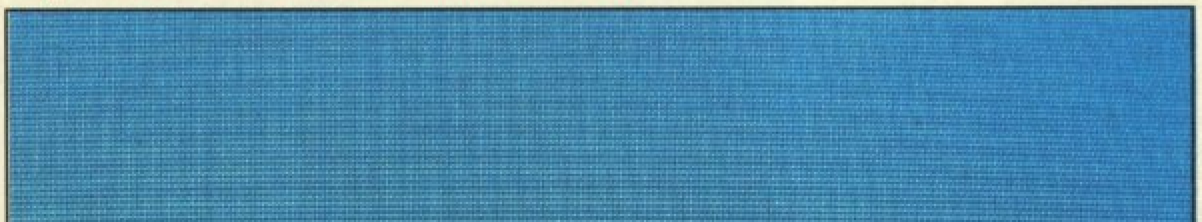
Putting the evil eye on yo

Er, duck!

BACK

BACKLASH	DIGITAL COINS DISPLAY
Video	9
Audio	7
Toughness	9
Endurance	9
VFM	7
CU RATING	8

Looks like it's been drinking heavily.



Novagen's *Backlash* is how Paul Woakes has been spending his time since writing the acclaimed *Mercenary*. And it hasn't been wasted. If you like your shoot 'em ups served neat and simple with no frills, then put *Backlash* on your list of essential purchases.

The instructions waste no time with tedious preambles telling you how the mutuant Thargs have colonised the distant planet Barg, and only you, armed with your trusty laser screen defence radar auto-activators, can save the galaxy. Just stick the joystick in and start shooting. No messy business with finding 16 keys to the secret processors in the enemy base then blasting out the mothership; just get yourself the highest score you can.

On the Amiga, *Backlash* looks very classy indeed. Designer blasting, in fact. You fly in low over the enemy terrain, marked out in a delicate shade of Habitat grey, dotted with installations, towers and buildings of suitably futuristic geometric shapes. The movement of your ship joystick-controlled, is beautifully fast and smooth, as you rush forward headlong, pull back, or scan around the horizon seeking out the enemy craft. It is more than reminiscent of that old fave *Encounter*.

You find your targets using the

Novagen
Price:



…n you.

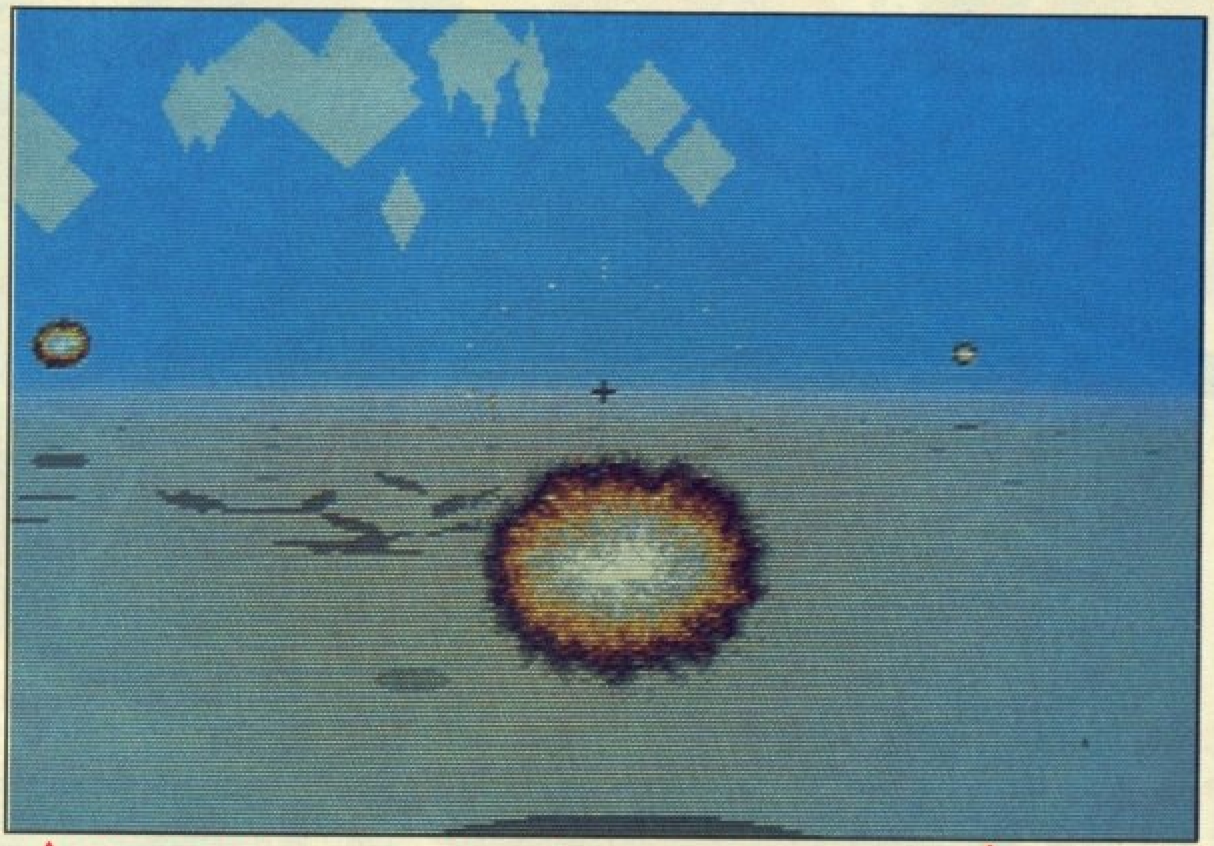
"radar" in the centre of the screen, which shows up white dots for ships, aircraft, whatever you care to call them, and red dots for the fireballs they will fire at you. Wheel around to face them head on, and fire to intercept the fireballs or shoot out the craft.

It's all very impressive to look at; the fireballs hurtle angrily towards you, the screen gets filled with shards and shrapnel as you blast away, your own bombs bounce away into the distance (reminiscent of all those Amiga demos we gasped at a year or so ago). So, how does it play?

Fast. Very fast, and furious. There's not a moment's let-up as you flick your eyes from radar to spot the ships and missiles back to screen to fire at them. It's tempting just to stick the autofire on, but this rather spoils the technique required. Luckily there's a pause function should the adrenalin get too much for you on occasions.

Backlash is a game for diehard blasting purists. The lack of any specified objective or variations in gameplay — the enemy craft get more sophisticated in later levels but the action is much the same, it just requires you to react even more speedily — almost adds to its appeal. Just disengage your brain and start shooting.

£19.95 disk



▲ **Shards of debris scatter from a destroyed nasty.**

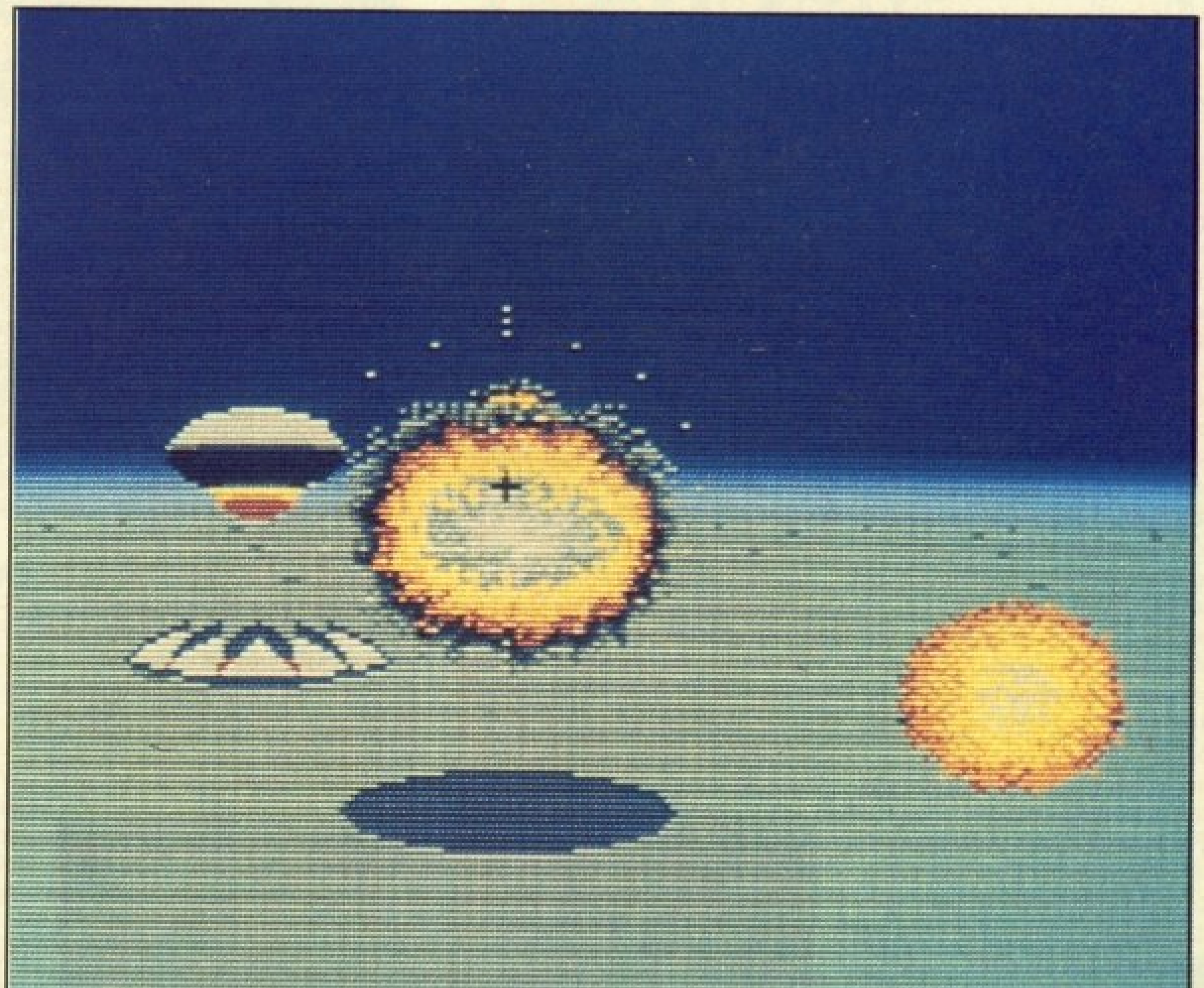
KLASH

The sound effects as you fire away add nicely to the atmosphere, although the opening tune is far too jolly and bouncy for the all-out aggression that is to follow. It hardly matters, though. Get yourself a decent joystick, and start scattering metal all over the sky.

Christina Erskine

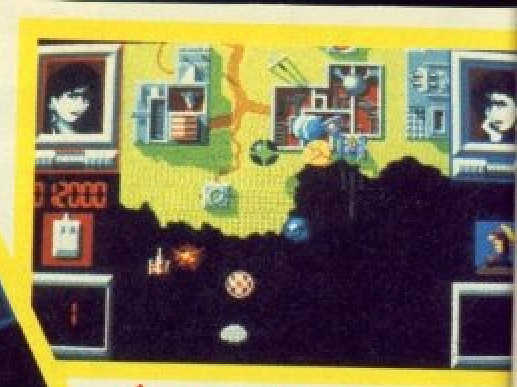
AMIGA

▼ **The Dark zone — the blasting hots up.**



BLACK SHADOW

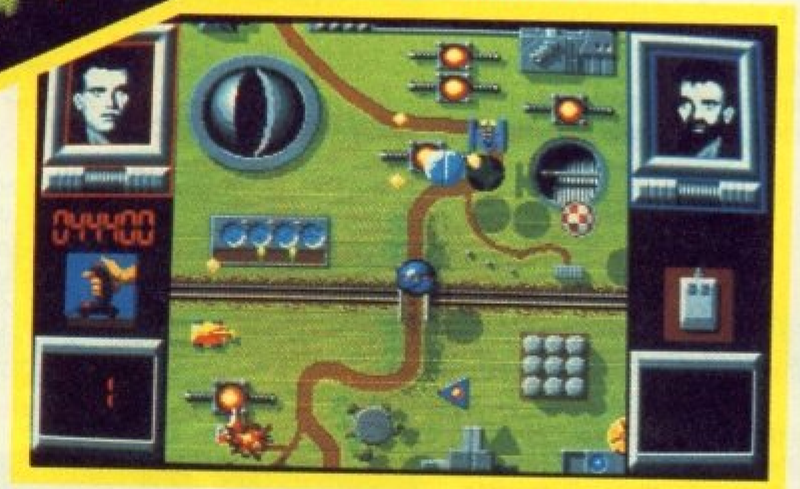




Pick a face to play.

Spot the Amiga demo ball.

Terra Cresta-style shooting.



CRL
Price: £19.99

Black Shadow is the latest offering from those overworked guys at CRL's Zen Room. The game is a scrolling shoot-em up which will probably come as no surprise to the many followers of this companys' exploits. What is new is the fact that it's their first game for the Amiga.

Upon booting, you are presented with a rather flashy title screen bearing the CRL logo and, of course, the title of the game. After a short burst of 'classical type' music you are welcomed to this project by a nice man with a BBC announcer accent. This is much like the old 'This is Cinema' message used in picture houses all over the country and is a very nice touch indeed.

Another picture later you are, at last, presented with an options page allowing one or two player participation. A player may select one of three characters to play the game with, but it doesn't really matter which one you choose and if you look closely at the male faces, you'll see both are the same guy, but one has a beard. It's all a bit pointless.

After setting your various preferences, you may begin play by selecting the 'tick' icon and pressing a button. Taking off from your launch pad, you are thrown straight into action, no messing.

Flying vertically up the screen with your character's portrait, score etc., decorating the far left and right of the screen you may start blasting and earning lots of points.

However, if you wish to go further than two inches up the screen, you must employ some method into your madness.

The first thing to do is take out the numerous rocket launchers which seem to be almost everywhere. These little orange nasties will throw row upon row of missiles in your direction, and if you don't do something about it quickly you may as well say your prayers.

To deal with these you need to use air-to-ground missiles, which can be accessed by pulling back on the stick/mouse while the button is held down. You may need two or three attempts at this, as judging the distance is quite difficult.

While trying all this, you have also to dodge lots of other alien ships which are sharing your airspace. These range from flashing globes and little 'Amiga Balls' to the more conventional type of baddy who flies in the classic alien spaceship. All in all you don't get much chance to look at an object before evasive action is required to avoid it.

As the landscape continues to scroll smoothly, but rather slowly, in a general downward direction, you will find that several of the buildings on the ground are in fact amazingly tall and therefore create yet another hazard to be swiftly avoided. Split second timing is often needed to prevent transformation into a pancake and a very plain one at that.

Although there seems to be an awful lot to the crash into, you do in fact only lose a ship after every three collisions, and will just see a nicely drawn explosion which you can fly away from.

When you lose a craft you are, unfortunately, chucked all the way back to the start of the current level no matter how far up you are. Another quirk is that in dual player mode, players must play as a team because when one guy loses all three lives, the game's over.

Getting back to the screen display, all the graphics in **Black Shadow** are hand drawn by artist Jon Law and some of the attention to detail, such as the glowing grates scattered about and the large metallic domes which open and close menacingly, is really effective.

Getting all the way to the end of a phase is in no way easy, but when this is eventually achieved your craft is welcomed with open arms by five or six rocket launchers which try their damnedest to send you back. To complete the level you have to destroy the flashing light which occupies the centre of the runway. One well aimed missile and you're on to the next level, which has a different graphical layout, a few more nasties and a lot more buildings — but not before you're given a side-view close up of your ship and get a little nod from the pilot.

If you actually manage to hit the red light at the end of this level, consider yourself wonderful and rejoice because I can't seem to do it for the life of me and get sent all the way back to the start.

With pretty neat graphics and reasonable sound effects, this game will probably appeal most to the gamester who likes the 'tactical shoot-em' rather than just straight blasting. The initial difficulty may, however, put off most people.

If it was slightly faster and had a bouncy soundtrack to blast with, this would almost certainly have been a Screen Star. Unfortunately it hasn't, so it ain't. Nice try, though.

Chris Cain

BLACK SHADOW — DIGITAL POINTS DISPLAY

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

VIDEO
AUDIO
TOUGHNESS
ENDURANCE
VFM

CU RATING
7

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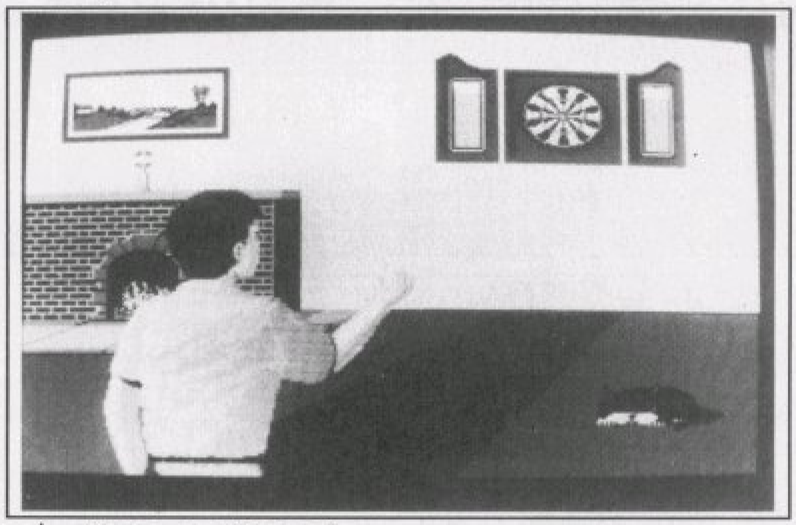
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Amiga
Databyte
Price: £19.95

Sports simulations go on and on; in Databyte's *Indoor Sports*, licensed from the US is an uprating of the 64 version. The sports in question are ones which are not so frequently computerised. All can be played either against the computer, or as a two player game.

Four games are on offer: tenpin bowling, darts, air hockey and ping pong/table tennis. All boast clear, large graphics and uncluttered screen displays, but playability

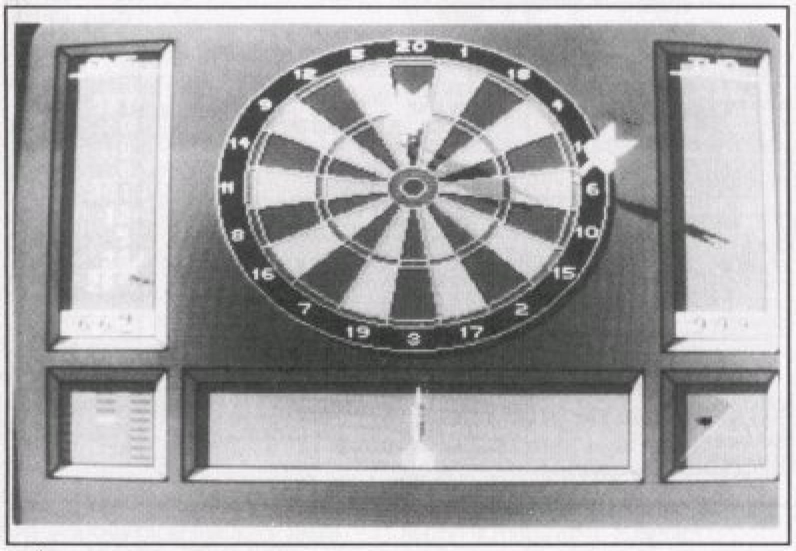


Nope, no signs of dartitis there.

INDOOR SPORTS

varies considerably between the four.

Darts is much the most accessible, with simple joystick controls. The shot selection screen features a huge, authentic-looking dartboard. Press the fire button to choose which part of the board to aim at,



Gets the double and he's off.

again to determine the level of arc of the dart and again to select the strength of your throw, all using clear pictorial menus. This screen then clears to give you a view from behind the oche of your throw being taken. One delightful touch here is the cat snoozing on the floor below the board. If your dart hits one of the metal dividers and falls on to the floor, the cat wakes up with a start.

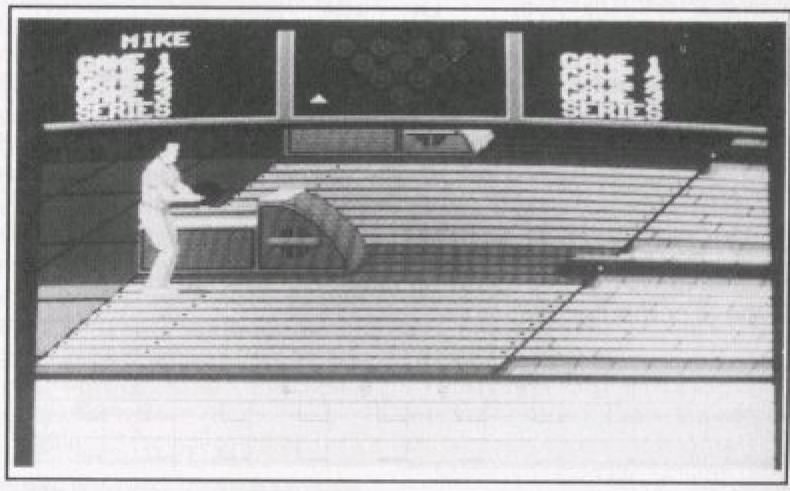
The darts section is easy to master. Tenpin bowling is another matter. The controls for bowling the ball are (unnecessarily) complicated and you get a side-on view of the bowler's end of the alley only, which is not the most straightforward way to plan your throw. The joystick must then be manipulated to indicate the amount of curve of the bowl and the fire button pressed to release the ball from the bowler's hand — or else he falls flat on his face, no doubt with a dislocated thumb.

Only then does the screen change to show a head-on view of the skittles and your ball thundering down for a strike — or pitching into the gutter. Having played Accolade's *Tenth Frame*, I can tell you there are better ways of implementing this particular indoor sport on computer. Sound effects are nice, though.

Air hockey's presentation is extremely simple: table, two "hitters" and a puck. This is not intended as a criticism; after all you don't need much else. Movement of the puck and your hitters is smooth and the game rapidly warms up into something pretty fast. Ping Pong also minimalises screen clutter by dispensing with any representation of players and portraying disembodied bats instead. These bats can hit the ball quite hard and fast; in some cases faster than your joystick can move your bat into position to hit the ball, no matter how hard you yank at it. As you cannot reposition your bat between shots, only during play, this is quite a drawback to building up a series of rallies.

Playing as one person against the computer, or completely solo in the case of tenpin bowling and darts might amuse you for a quiet twenty minutes, but Indoor Sports really needs to be played with a human opponent to get some competitive edge and excitement going. All the four games are nicely presented and the graphics are pleasing, but I have my doubts about the playability of the ping pong and to a lesser extent, the tenpin bowling implementations.

Christina Erskine



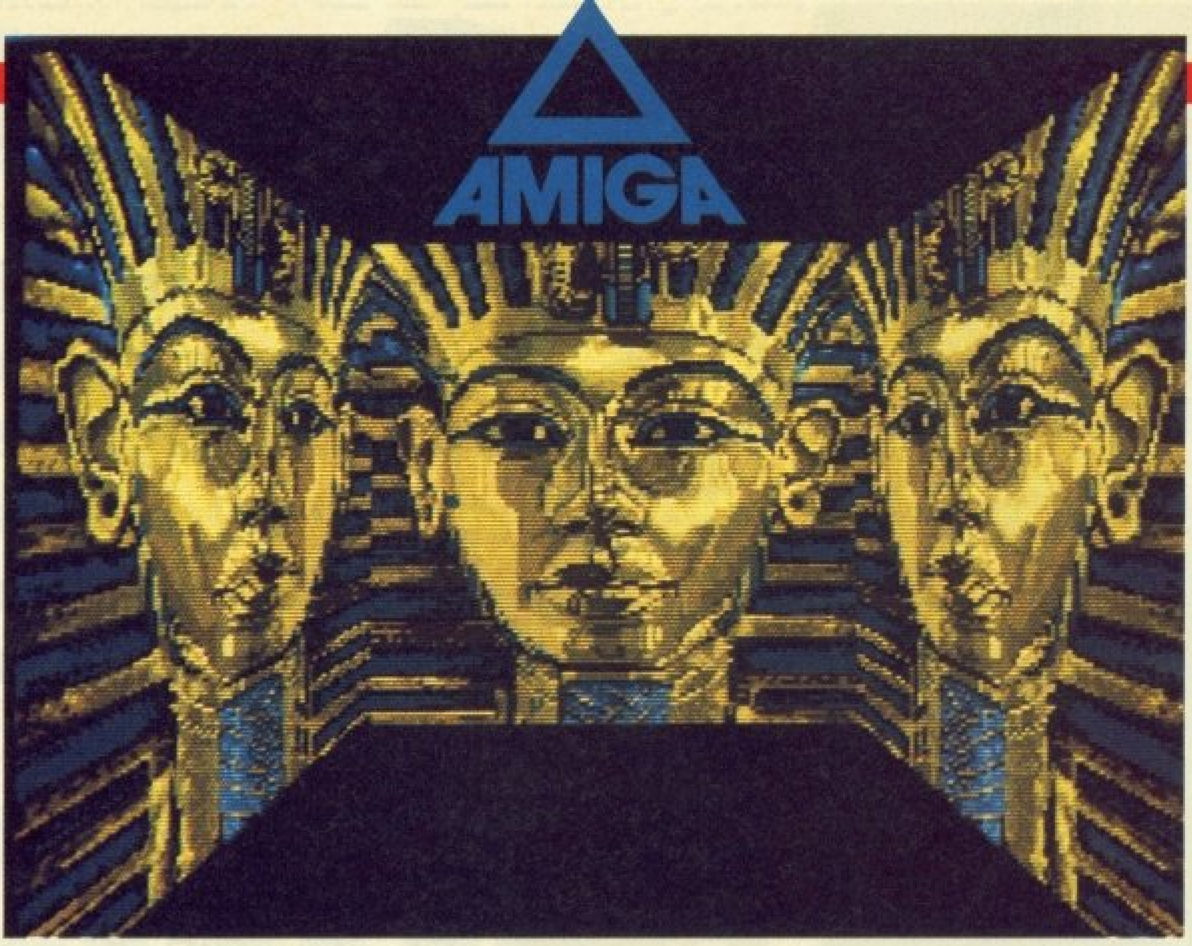
AMIGA

INDOOR SPORTS — DIGITAL POINTS DISPLAY

	Rating (1–10)
Video	8
Audio	7
Toughness	6
Endurance	7
VFM	8

CU RATING

7



If you dumped your free copy of *Deluxe Paint* in the bottom drawer when you unpacked your brand spanking new Amiga 500 and then forgot all about it, you've really been missing out. *Deluxe Paint* is not only a very good art program, it's one of the only packages yet available that shows what your Amiga is really capable of. That's why they put it in the box.

Your friends will think you're some kind of art whizkid, until they start using it themselves — and then they won't let you get near it. Admittedly the instruction book is a little too thick for comfort, but you can achieve pretty spectacular thing without even bothering to open it, since the only thing you need use is the mouse. You both draw with it and select functions by clicking icons and pulling down menus. When you do eventually browse through the manual, it's not a bad read.

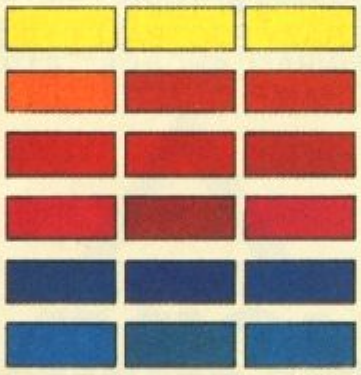
TECHNICOLOUR

Electronic Arts, who wrote the program, have just announced *Deluxe Paint II*, an enhanced version that offer a whole lot more. Apparently, they actually asked existing users to tell them exactly what extra features they'd like and then went ahead and put them all in. Why don't more companies do that? You can get the upgrade for £29.95 if you return the original version along with the coupon you should find in the box. Since the retail value of Deluxe Paint II is £69.95, this sounds like pretty good value.

But let's first look at what you're missing out on if you've not yet peeled off the shrink wrapping. Is it worth shelling out the extra money for the upgraded version?

Deluxe Paint for free

The first thing that strikes you about *Deluxe Paint* is that it is very colourful indeed (obviously the colours show up better if you're using the Amiga 1081 monitor). The reason is that you have an overall choice of 4096 colours. How many you get to use in a drawing depends on what resolution you're working in (low, medium or high) and how much memory you've got. But even on the basic Amiga 500 setup you get a colour-palette in both low and medium resolutions. Van Gogh probably didn't have that many.



And the colour palette can be customised to suit your needs. You get full control over every colour for mixing both red, green and blue and the intensity. So you could effectively use a 'custom' colour palette for every drawing you do. It's like mixing real paint, only you don't mess up the carpet.

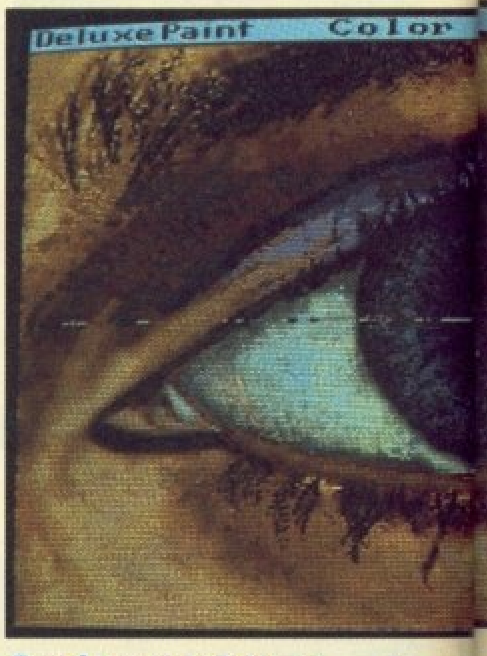
Deluxe Paint works on a 'brush' system. As well as providing standard brush sizes and shapes, you can create your own brushes simply by drawing anything whatsoever on the screen and then framing it for use as a brush. You can even frame any part of a painting and brush with that. That brush works in the same way as the standard ones, including all the effects provided in the Brush menu. Brushes can even be as large as the screen and you can save them to disk, thus creating a library for future use.

Special effects using a brush include the usual rotate, stretch and flip, but you can also bend both horizontally and vertically, double or halve the brush size. So you could write your name onto the screen, frame it as a brush and bend the brush so the letters appear like the 'Cinemascope' logo. It's all very quick and easy to do. There's even a 'smear' option that looks as though you've smudged the colours.

Deluxe Paint also gives you a function that looks like animation. It's called colour cycling. If you've created a circle from coloured bars, for example, you can cycle all the colours used so that the circle looks as though it's spinning. One example drawing on the art disk supplied shows a waterfall; the program cycles the colours used in the water so that it appears to be flowing.

Another spectacular effect that's easy to achieve is symmetrical drawing using the Symmetry tool This gives you a kaleidoscope effect, but you can control how may starting points there are and how the symmetry behaves. Points can mirror themselves, cycle round a central point or even start at different points. It sounds complicated but all you have to do is experiment with the various options and see what happens. Just about any setting will produce something really spectacular — or just really weird.

Unlike most drawing programs you've seen, *Deluxe Paint* provides you with two drawing screens and you can flip between them by pressing a single key. This is very handy because you can store a stock of picture elements on one screen and bring them into you work screen whenever you need them. It's also handy for trying effects before you incorporate them in your drawing.



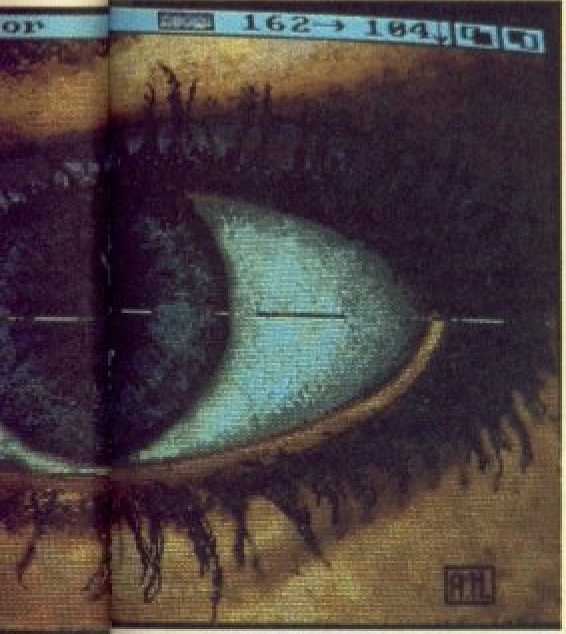
Bend, perspectivise or smear colours and that's just for starters with *D Paint II*.

Apart from that, you get the usual toolbox functions: filled and unfilled squares and circles, lines, curves and ellipses, dots, freehand draw, fill, maginify — and a very handy 'undo' command. For greater accuracy, you can show x and y co-ordinates and create a grid, specifying the spaces between grid lines.

As you'd expect, the magnifying option enlarges any area of the screen you select. In low res mode, you're working with pixel blocks whilst in hi-res mode, you're actually able to control individual pixels for very accurate work.



R DREAMS



As you'd expect, any drawing can be saved to disk and can be printed too. Since most printer owners have only single-colour dot matrix printers, *Deluxe Paint* offers printing in black and white and in shades of grey, with colours changed to their most appropriate shade. That's the trouble with *Deluxe Paint*, you really need to print in colour — and colour printers don't come cheap.

Deluxe Paint II

Seeing that you get so much for free, is it worth paying nearly £30 to get the newer version? The answer is that it definitely is. But to take full advantage of the extra facilities you'll probably have to upgrade the memory on your A500 by buying the slot-in 500K cartridge.

Deluxe Paint II offers three major improvements on the original version:

● **Perspective Mode**: Firstly, it now has a totally new 'perspective' function. This adds a whole new dimension to *Deluxe Paint* — a third one. *DPaint II* lets you draw and arrange elements three-dimensionally whilst keeping their perspective. You can set the perspective point wherever you like. this works for parts of drawings as well as shapes and fill patterns. For example, you could take King Tut's face (he appears on the sample disk) and 'perspectivise' it so that it looks as though it's painted on a ceiling.

Perspective drawing is the most complex of the new *DPaint II* functions and takes some grasping because you're dealing with not only length, breadth and depth, but a rotation around each of those three planes. The manual helps by giving you a few examples to work through.

Although it's difficult, drawing in perspective mode gives the most spectacular result and once you've mastered it, you won't want to bother with boring old 2-D any more.

● **Stenciling**: The second enhancement is the Stencil mode. Using 'stencil' you can lock any of the colours in your current palate so that, whatever you draw on top of your drawing, the colours you've locked cannot be drawn over until you turn the stencil off

An obvious use for stencilling is when you're using the airbrush tool. You can 'mask' off parts of the screen so that whatever's there can't be accidentally sprayed over.

● **Fixed background**: Finally, *DPaint II* lets you fix any drawing as a background. The drawing you've fixed effectively becomes a backdrop which is not corrupted when you draw on top of it. Pressing the clear button simply removes what you drew, leaving the backdrop intact.

So you could draw your picture of Loch Ness, define it as a background and draw as many monsters as you like on top of it without messing up the lake or the scenery.

Unforunately, you may need more than the A500's basic memory to be able to do this. But it is possible to achieve in 500K if you choose 'swap' instead of 'load all' when you load the program. This loads only part of the program, the rest being loaded as and when you need it.

● **Minor Improvements**: *DPaint II* also offers a few more minor improvements. One of them is called anti-alius and it works in Brush mode. If you put two sharply contrasting colours together, anti-alius will smooth the transitions between them.

Another function that works along the same lines is 'dither'. When you've set a range of colours for cycling of filling, the dither command (it's a scroll bar) gradually blends the colours together — at one end you get distinct colour stripes, at the other you get smooth transitions between them, giving very classy shading effects.

D Paint also lets you create a drawing size bigger than the screen, and you can use the cursor keys to scroll around it, and hide both the top bar and the toolbox to give you a larger area.

Lastly, the new *DPaint* works in PAL video and not in NTSC (American) model. This will only interest video buffs, but the upshot is that you'll be able to use *Deluxe*

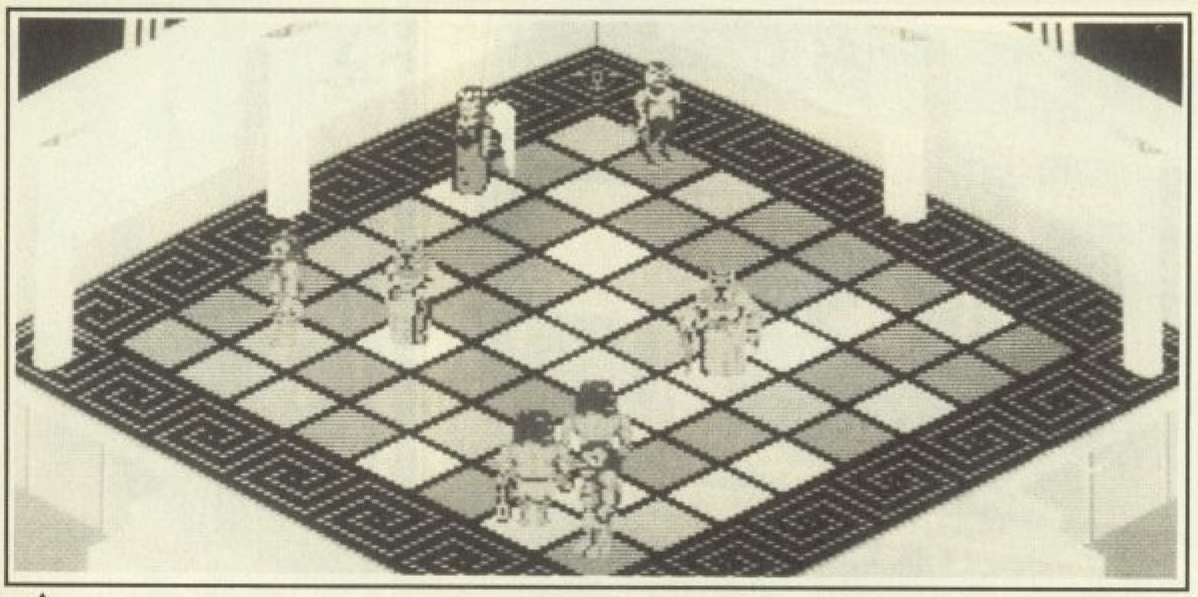


Paint with Electronic Arts' Deluxe Video, a program that lets you mix art with video output from your video recorder — and lots more too complex to mention.

Deluxe Paint is one of those programs that you can't stop using once you've got the hang of it. It's very easy and almost anything you do will look good. But if you're already hooked on the program, (and you can afford it) it's well worth getting the new version. This is better than anything I've ever seen on the ST or the Mac. Me? I can't wait for Deluxe Paint III.

POWERPLAY

Amiga
Price: £19.99



There seems to be no let-up in the demand for trivia quiz style games, although all appear to need an additional hook or scenario to put the quiz element into some sort of context; *Powerplay* is presented, rather ingeniously, as a do-or-die battle of Greek Gods.

Explaining the game is probably more complicated than actually playing it. One to four players can take part, each taking the role of Apollo, Hermes, Hecate or Aphrodite. Each of these has four players, also characters from Greek mythology, on their "team".

The game is played on a board of eight by eight squares, coloured according to question topics: blue for general knowledge, red for sport and leisure, yellow for history/geography and green for science and technology.

Your characters move one square in any direction by answering a question successfully. The object is to manoeuvre the figures so that they can capture squares occupied by one of your opponents' characters. Before making your move onto an enemy square, you and the opponent go through a quickfire question challenge to fight for the right to that square.

The challenges take place in one of three different scenarios: the top of Mount Olympus, the depths of Hades, or in Medusa's cave. Get three questions right — or answer them correctly before your opponent does — and you win the challenge.

Answering questions adds to the character's wisdom quotient. When that reaches 25 points you may if you like, "mutate" that character into a higher grade player; there are four grades in all. Questions for higher grade characters become more difficult. Losers of challenges will either mutate back down a grade, or if they are of the lowest to start with, will be eliminated from the board. The winner is the last player to be left with any pieces on the board, all opponents having been wiped out in challenges.

In the one player verions, you play against Zeus, king of the Gods, and the strongest "army" he can muster.

There are other details, but that's basically how the game is played, a sort of draughts or halma meeting Trivial Pursuit in a classical setting. And very enjoyable it is too, though obviously playing with human opponents is a lot more fun and more satisfying than playing against the computer. The gameplay works well, and gives the program an interesting strategic element.

Two thousand questions are supplied on the program disk in a multiple choice format. There is the odd spelling mistake in the answers, but I haven't spotted any that are ambiguous, or simply incorrect. There is also a question compiler facility which allows you to add questions of your own, an excellent feature.

The presentation is of high standard, with a clear screen layout, and nicely differentiated individual characters. However, I confess to being slightly disappointed in the graphics — they're good, but they're not *that* good. Some very atmospheric sound effects though.

So long as your appetite for trivia hasn't been entirely jaded by now, *Powerplay* is well worth checking out for its freshness of approach.

Christina Erskine

POWERPLAY — DIGITAL POINTS DISPLAY

	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
VIDEO	7
AUDIO	5
TOUGHNESS	7
ENDURANCE	7
VFM	6

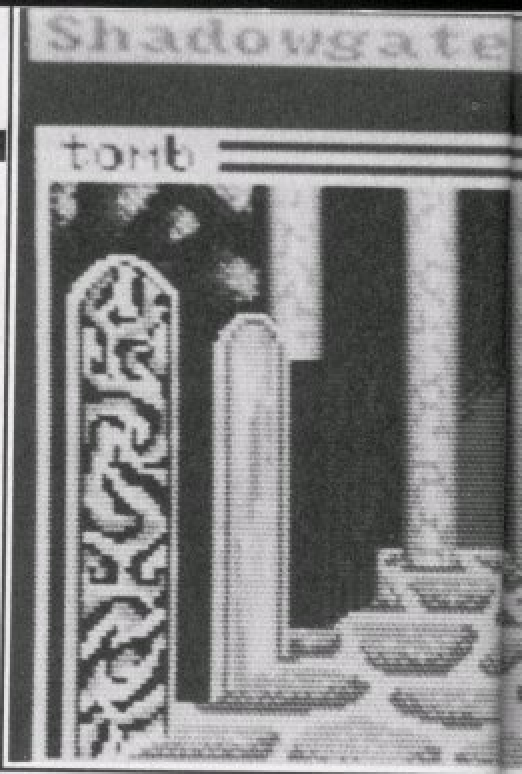
CU RATING
7



AMIGA



Supernatural erosion? Sounds a bit funny to us.



What's in the sarcaphagi mummy?

SHADO

AMI

Amiga
Mirrorsoft/ Mindscape
Price: £29.99

The latest in the Mindscape's Amigaventures, follows on from the excellent *Deja Vu* and the pretty good *Uninvited.* In *Shadowgate* you find yourself taking on the role of the final generation of the 'Line of Kings', and your quest is to find and dispose of the Warlock Lord who, surprise surprise, is the cunningly evil villain in this game.

As you would expect, there is a reason for you to want to get rid of Warlock, and it is that he has, in a manner not unlike the baddies in Bat Man, decided to take control of the world by bringing back to life something called the Titan of Behemoth, which the manual assures us is one of the deadliest creatures ever to tramp on this earth.

For anyone who has played either *Deja Vu* or *Uninvited,* the way of playing this game will immediately feel familiar. Those people more used to blasting things with the mouse, and playing adventures with the keyboard will, however, find the user-interface (that's the way you control your characters actions to you and me) both novel and perfectly-suited to the Amiga.

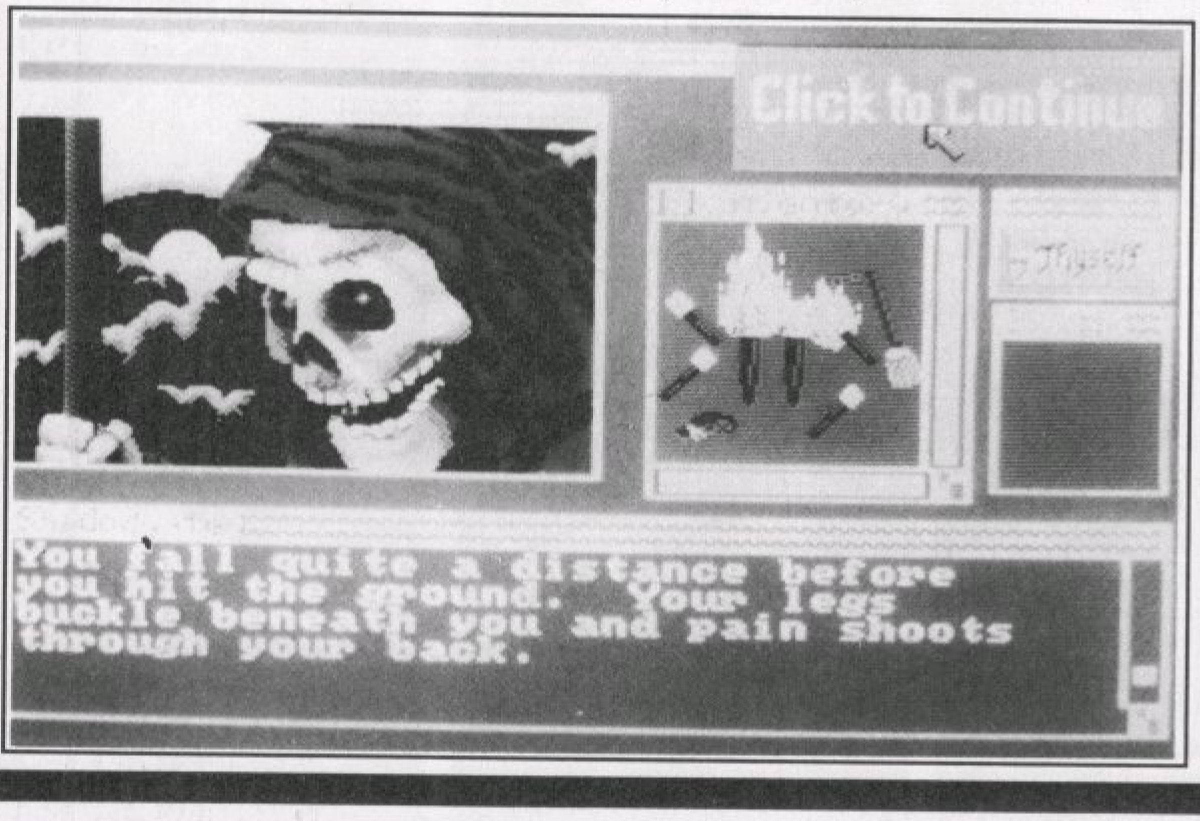
On screen at any one time there are six windows, each one giving you information vital to your quest. At the top left corner of your screen is the graphics window, showing your surroundings. As well as that there is a text window for written description of locations, an inventory window to show what you are carrying, and an exits window to show any non-visible ways of getting out.

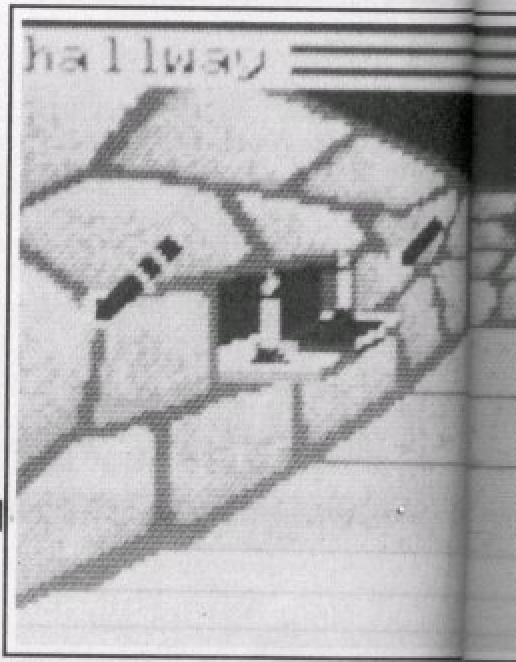
To take any actions in the game there is a menu system which allows you to choose one of eight suitable actions to take. They are, in no particular order: Examine, Open, Close, Speak, Operate, Go, Hit, and Consume.

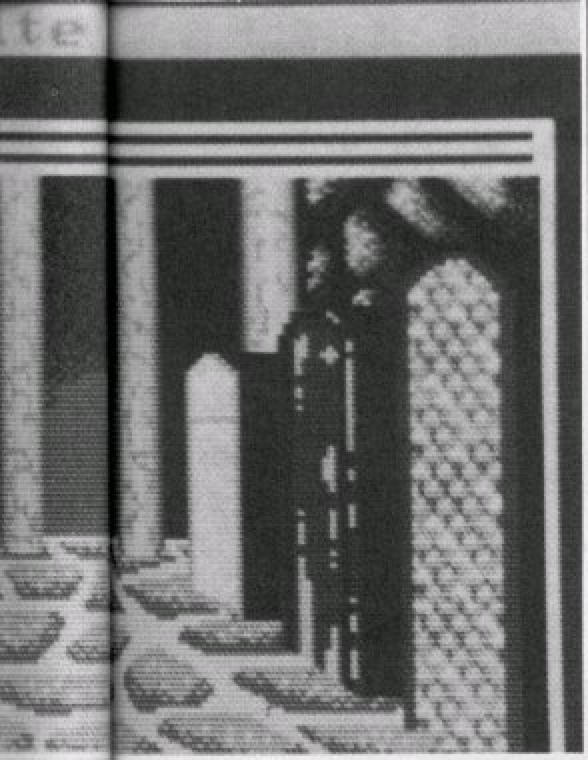
The first thing you see when playing *Shadowgate* is a front door with a skull above it. It leads to a hall with two doors, both of which are firmly locked. As you wait in the hall, the torch you are carrying goes out and you are, to put it in plain English, buggered.

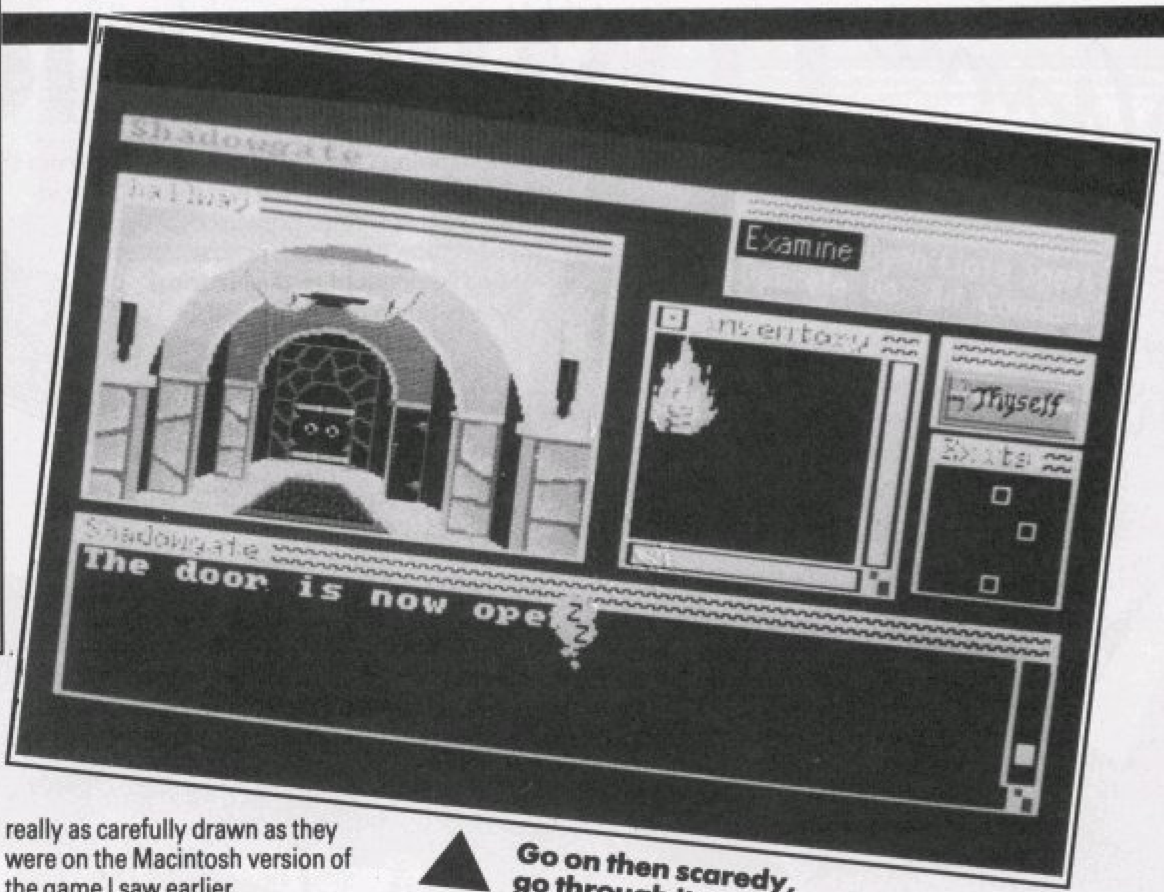
To get past this, you must tell the computer to attempt to move the

The skull beneath the skin.









▲ **Go on then scaredy, go through it.**

OWGATE

MIGA

skull. This is done as follows: click the mouse on operate, then on the window called 'thyself' and then on the skull. That will then reveal what you need to get past the first problem. In essence what you are doing is telling the computer you want to move the skull.

As with both its predecessors, *Deja Vu* and *Uninvited,* Shadowgate was originally programmed for the Macintosh, but Mindscape have perfected porting it to the Amiga, and the changes it has made to the graphics and in particular sound, mean the game does begin to use the Amiga's facilities.

Each room you enter has a different picture, ranging from basic dungeons to raging demons (the latter being accompanied by an impressive scream). Colour is used well, although the pictures are not really as carefully drawn as they were on the Macintosh version of the game I saw earlier.

What *Shadowgate* does have that *Deja Vu* did not is animation and extensive use of sampled sound. The animation is fairly limited at the beginning of the game, to rats scuttling across the floor and eyes glinting at you menacingly, but later on it becomes a little more widespread.

The sound effects are surprisingly good. Screams, hysterical laughs, and creaking doors are just three of the multitude of impressive and atmospheric sounds that add a great deal to the game.

Overall *Shadowgate* is a pretty good game. To quote the advertisement currently running for it in the American press it is "a new way to give thrill-seekers the willies" (oo-er sounds a bit rude!), and although I couldn't agree with that, it did provide a few hours harmless fun. Unfortunately, retailing as it does at £29.99 you have to either be very rich or very dedicated to buy it.

Ian J. Frogsac

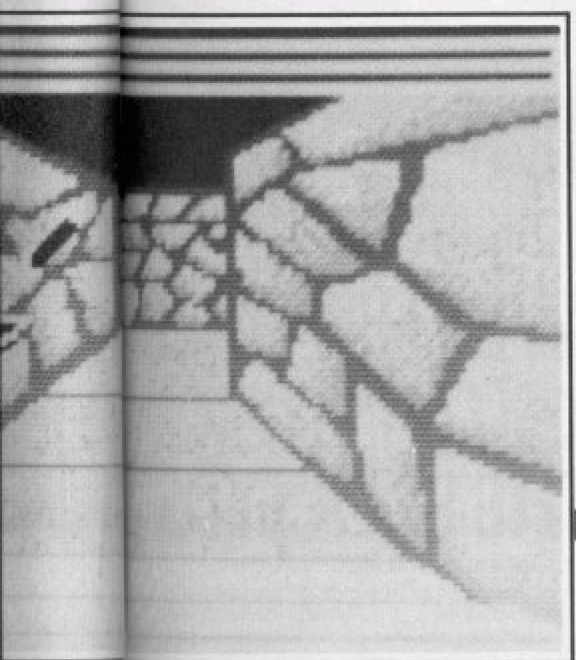
SHADOWGATE	DIGITAL POINTS DISPLAY (1–10)
Video	6
Audio	7
Toughness	6
Endurance	6
VFM	3

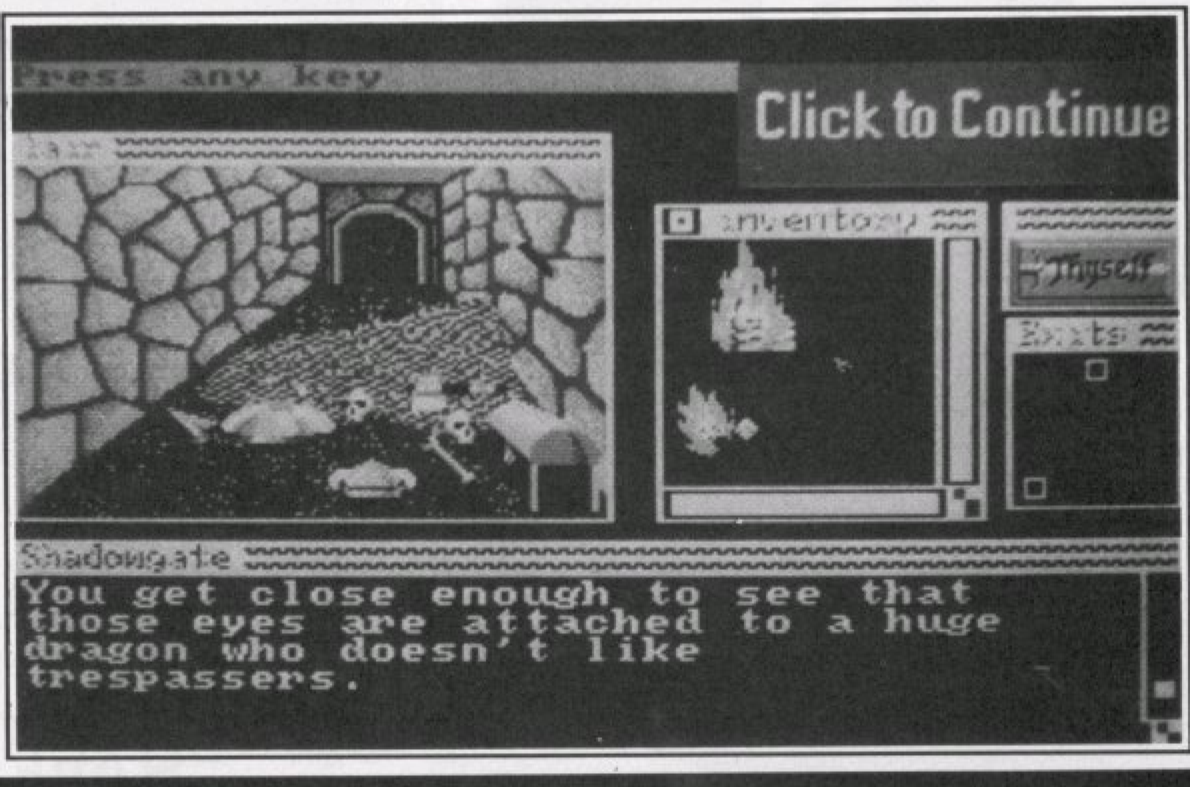
CU RATING

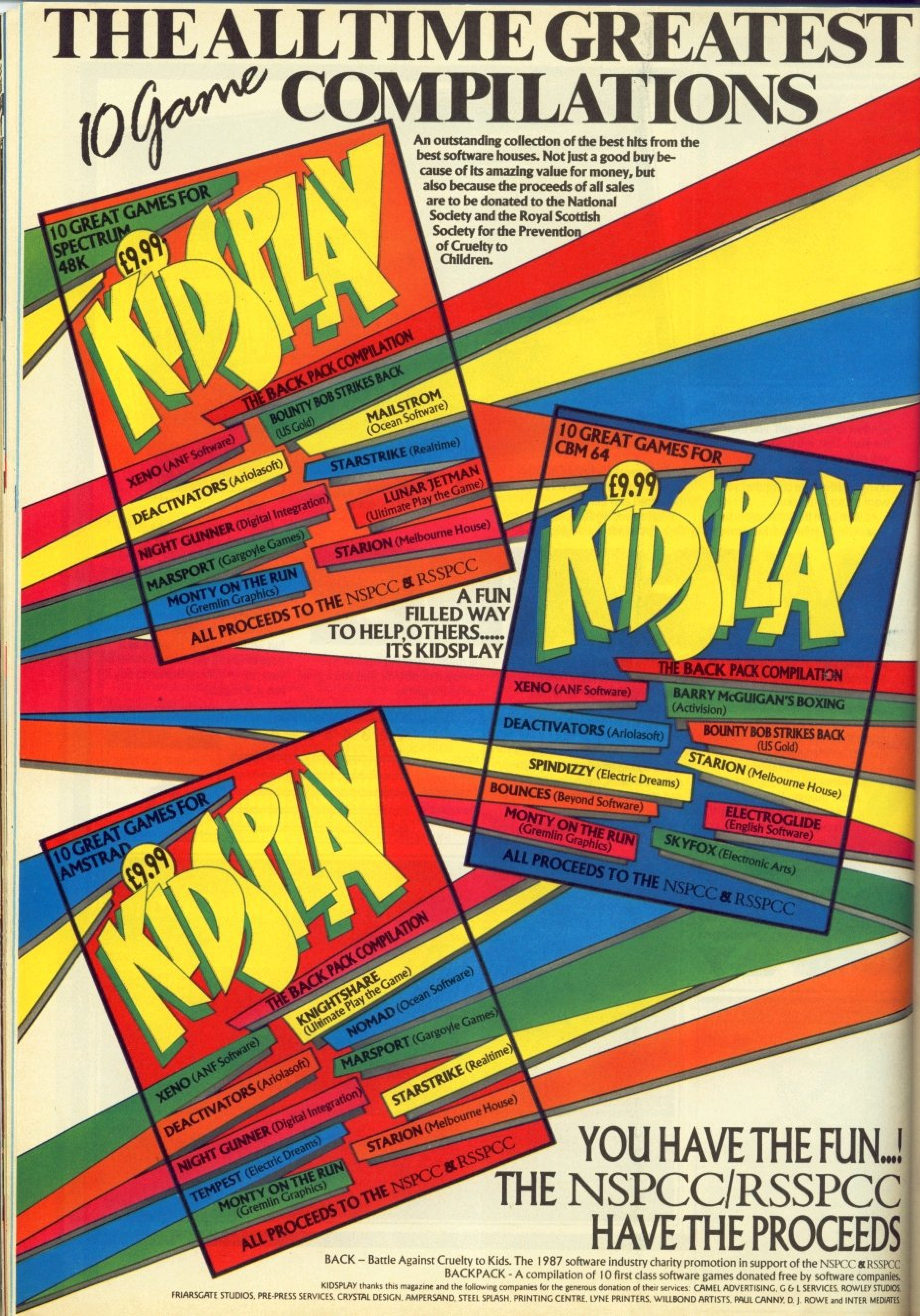
6

▼ **Must be a big dog!**

Follow that passage! ▼

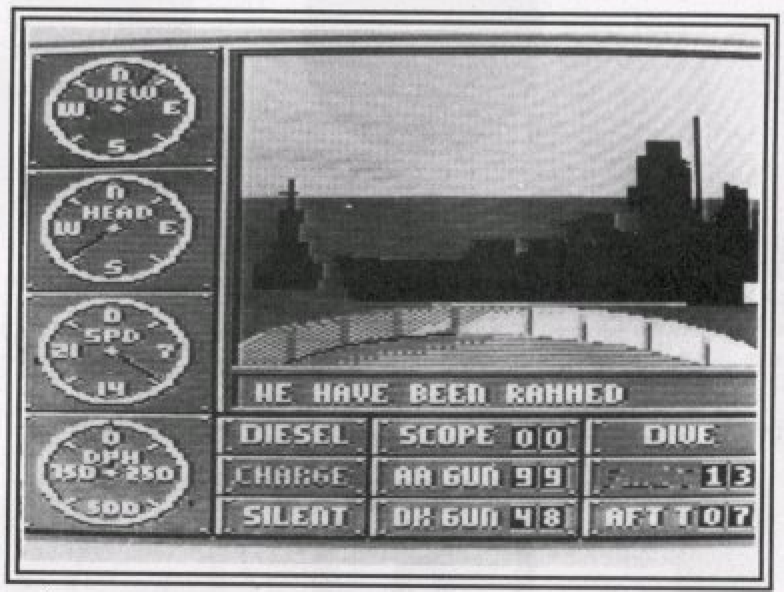






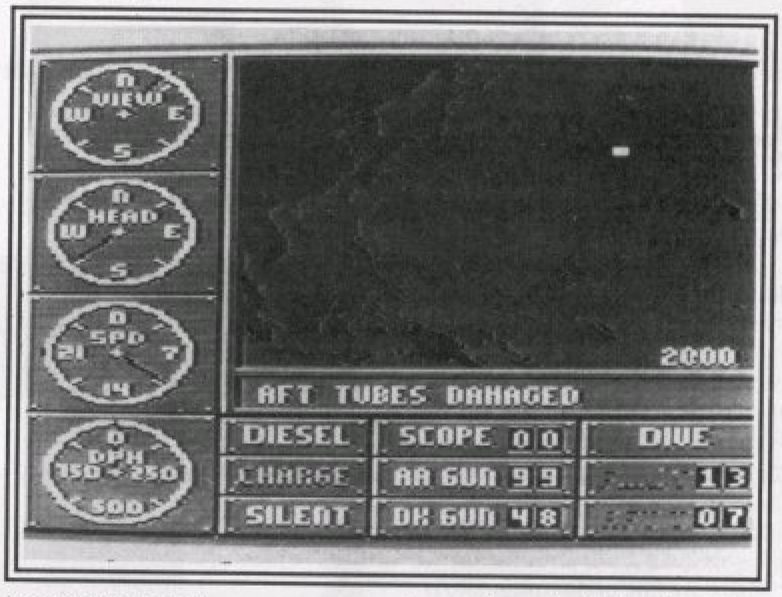
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SUB BATTLE SIM



▲ Woah! That cruiser's a little bit close.

▼ The map showing your position.



64/128
US Gold
Price:
£9.99/cass
£14.99/disk

Little over a year ago, if you went into your local software retailer and asked for a submarine simulator all you would get was a vacant look. Now there is a fair choice, most of which are of a high quality, *Sub Battle* is no exception.

Sub Battle is set over the period covering the Second World War and allows you to play a number of different scenarios. Unless you choose to be an American then you start your command in 1939. When you take command of a submarine you are assigned one of several different types depending again on whose side you wish to play. You can either choose the training mission which involves sinking as many ships as possible then returning back to base in one piece. Then there's a single mission option which allows you to try out one of the sixty available missions at random. And finally there's the full war command, which takes you right from the start to the end of the war for your side.

Some of the missions may include patrolling a set area for ten days, destroying all the enemy shipping you can catch, then moving on to a different location and repeating the exercise. Or you might be asked to take urgent supplies to stranded troops in hostile countries.

The game design is very well executed. With a full map of the world showing your position, the enemy position and the location of your bases. The nearby area around you can be zoomed in on to give you a more accurate picture of what you're up against. Around the bottom and sides of the screen are the various gauges showing speed, heading, depth, view, ammunition and so forth. You also have sonar and radar at your disposal to help you plot a successful course to your enemy. These are essential pieces of equipment, because if you choose a high different level enemy craft will not be shown on the map and the first warning you get of any enemy approaching will be a message from one of the crew flashed up on the screen saying that they have a possible eneny contact.

A handy feature on the low levels is an auto navigation device, useful for getting from a to b. Just enter your destination coordinates, cruising speed, and you'll be transported there in a matter of seconds. Far easier than messing about trying to circumnavigate any landmasses in your way. Another useful feature is the time compression key. Similar to a time acceleration key, you can have one second equal to 5 seconds, a half minute, ten minutes, or four hours which is useful for long missions.

When your boat goes to battle stations, you have several ways of viewing the scene. You can stand on the watch tower and issue your orders from there while on the surface of the ocean, or you can use your binoculars. If you think the enemy looks too overbearing you can submerge and use the classic phrase 'up periscope'. The problem with being under water though is you can only fire your torpedoes and not your deck or anti-aircraft guns. Each side has four different types of torpedo and are issued according to whether they had been discovered at the time you chose to play, as some torpedoes are not in use until 1943. Each style has different ranges, and a different chance of being dud. This is where the Americans were at a disadvantage, their mk14 torpedo has a huge 62% chance of being dud.

The deck guns the subs are fitted with tend to have an average range of 12,000 feet, not much when you think guns aboard enemy ships can fire anyware up to 54,000 feet! If a ship is getting too close for comfort and the deck guns are unloaded, and torpedos are all spent, you can open up on it with the anti-aircraft guns, they don't inflict major damage but they fire fast enough to polish off a heavily damaged ship. As a last resort though, you could turn to ramming as an option. Or you could send out an SOS and abandon ship if the going gets really tough.

But never underestimate the enemy, if you're attacked by a convoy with an aircraft carrier, you are in big trouble. The first thing you notice will be black specks on the horizon, slowly coming clearer and clearer. Armed with bombs and depth charges, you are in trouble.

Though dead ships sometimes prove a problem, if a sinking ship is in front of you, any ship behind is safe from your fire because you automatically target on the nearest thing to head on.

One problem I did find though was that sometimes the controls were sluggish in their response to urgent commands like crash dive. Not that I'm complaining about the fact I was equipped with torpedoes not issued until four years after my mission.

Apart from these small gripes though, *Sub Battle* proved itself to be a very absorbing and comprehensive simulation with atmospheric sound effects and pretty good visuals.

Mark Patterson

SUB BATTLE SIMULATOR — *DIGITAL POINTS DISPLAY*

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

VIDEO
AUDIO
TOUGHNESS
ENDURANCE
VFM

CU RATING
8

64/128
Firebird
Price: £1.99

I BALL 2

He bounces back! Hot on the heels of *I Ball* comes the repeat showing, devastatingly good, just like the original.

This time you have your little ball bouncing through ancient labryinths trying to find artifacts showing how the ancestors of the ball race lived. He has been chosen by the ball people's top archiologists to search deep down in the dark caverns. Armed only with a puny little flame thrower, *I Ball* takes the plunge underground to find how the ancients lived . . .

There are fifty underground mines. The extrance and exit from one cove to the next is locked. At the end of every five mines is a priceless artifact. The first being an ancient skull which resembles a sabre-tooth tiger rather than a ball. The caverns contain stacks of hazards which have to be overcome to reach the key and then the door to the next level. Boulders have to be pushed, removed or toppled, and you might just have to wait until a pile of rocks mysteriously vanishes. There might be a hidden exit or a useful object hidden underneath or it might start a chain reaction causes a whole load of rocks to come crashing down and make grapefruit juice out of *I Ball*. Other hazards to look out for are highly dangerous radioactive blocks which bounce slowly up and down and prove fatal to an under-cautious ball.

Sometimes the control of the ball can be very frustrating, expecially when you try to bounce through a small gap.

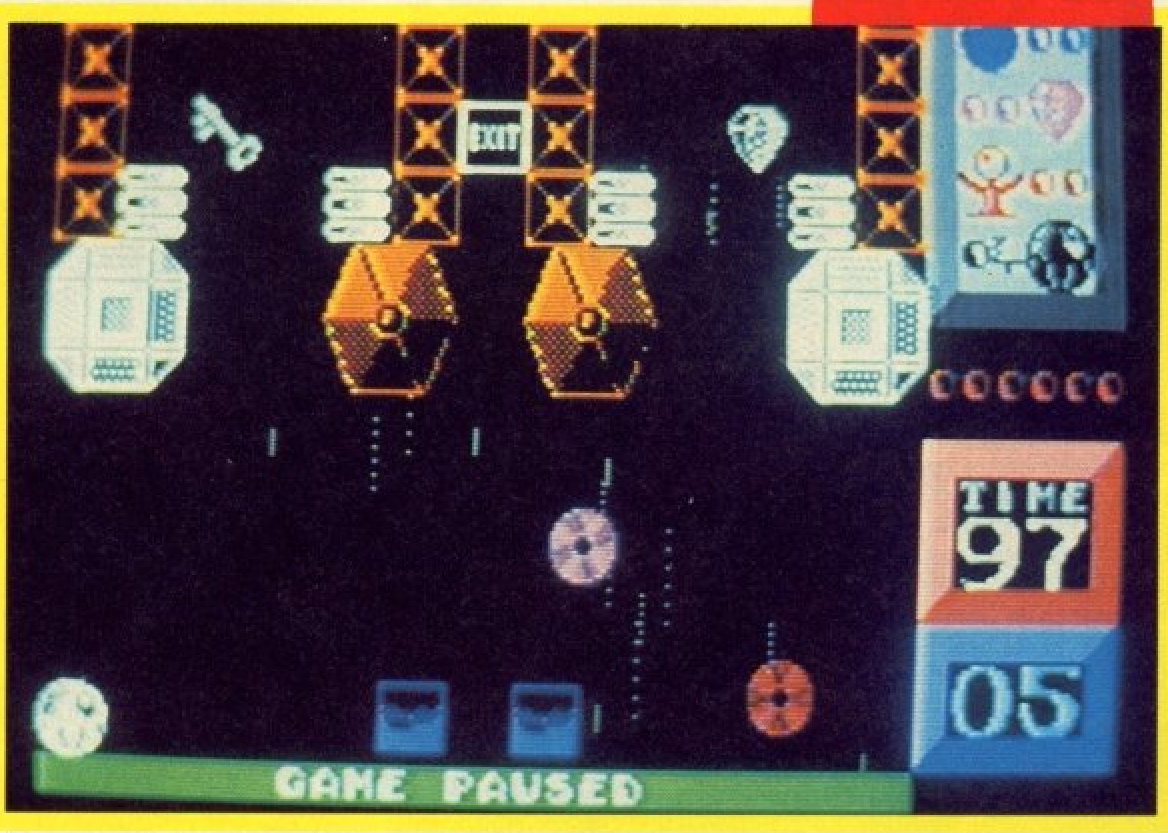
Power stones are about the only really helpful items in the game . They give you weird powers or cause weirdish things to happen to the mutants. The mutants just happen to be there as you start your exploration. The power stones can either make you faster, bounce higher, or increase your firepower. They can also slow the mutants down or make them totally inoperative. Smart bombs are also part of your rather basic armour, and they too have to be dug out of the rocks.

I have to give full marks to Firebird on this one, it's as crucial as a pixy in a microwave. It has stacks of addictiveness and playability, but differs from *I Ball One* in that all the action takes place on a single static screen, whereas the first game didn't.

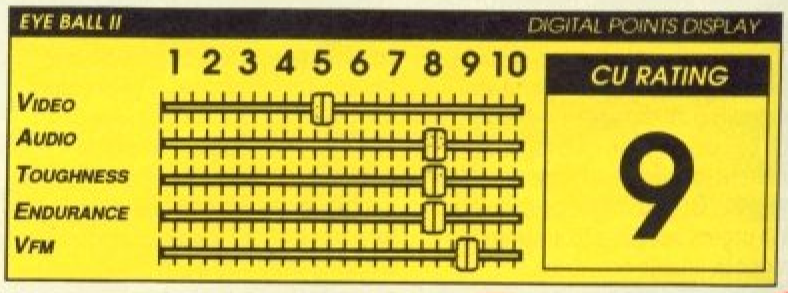
The graphics appear to have been toned down somewhat, and more resemble the Spectrum than a 64 game. The sound is of the same standard as the first game, high quality and lots of it, with the computer blurting out comments whenever you collect an object.

A really great game and at a price which leaves you change for a penny sweet. So what are you waitin' for? Go geddit!

Mark Patterson



▲ **The ball with a stutter returns!**



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RAINBOW DRA

64/128
Firebird
Price: £1.99

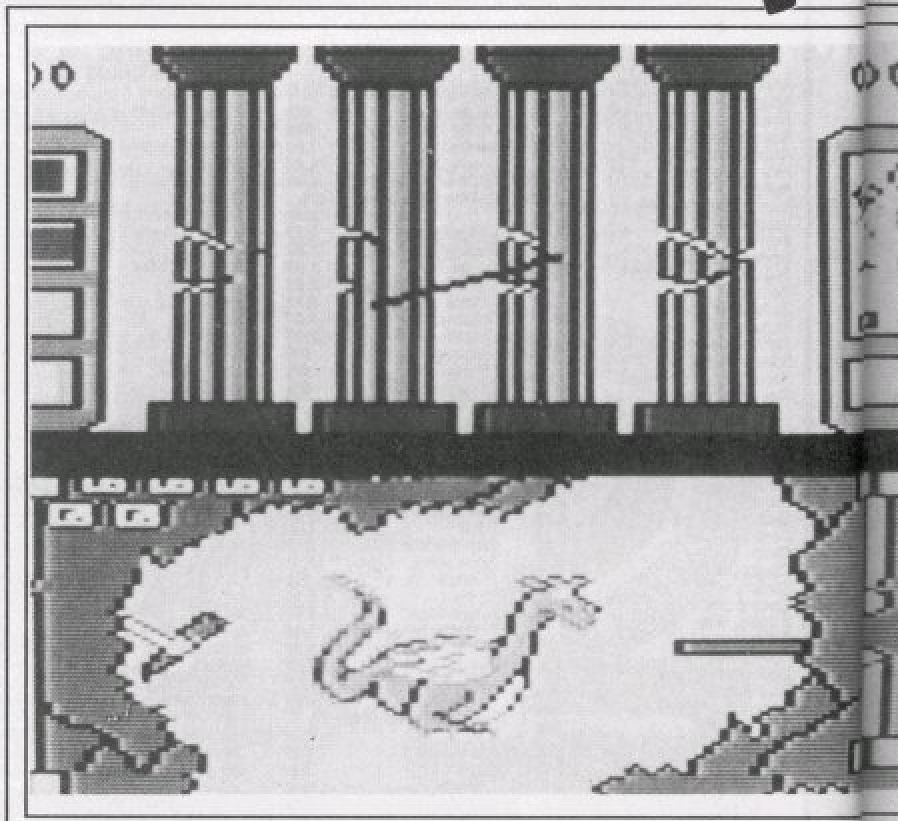
A long, long, long time ago, in a land far, far, far away, lived creatures wonderful and generally weird beyond our comprehension. One such creature was the Asturias, a flying fire-breathing mythical dragon. Unfortunately, even with all his powers, one of these dragons has managed to get himself trapped in an underground temple.

To escape, Asturias has to search, find and destroy ten magical chests as well as overcome various obstacles like falling rocks and blocked passages, not to mention force fields. The biggest hazard he faces, though, arises from the pillars supporting the temple roof, which are very old and are starting to crumble. The only way Asturias can overcome this problem is by using his magic on them. The four pillars are graphically represented at the top of the screen, and as time goes on ever-widening cracks appear in each of them. Some pillars crack more slowly than the others. The only way the lizard can stop them from cracking in half and bringing the temple roof down on his head is to cast a repair spell on them. This is done by activating the spell half of the screen and moving his little wand on to the pillar that needs repairing the most. It is best not to repair pillars that are only slightly damaged because you have a limited amount of spell power.

Other spells include *detect magic*, which causes any magic on the screen to glow, *read magic*, which will read any messages or clues lying around, and finally, *dispel illusions*, which will cause anything that is not really there but is there to not be there anymore, so you can guide Asturias through there which is now here to the next there (*what?? — Ed*).

As you travel through the caverns of the temple, you will find exits blocked by force fields, guarding the way to the next level. These can only be deactivated when a problem is solved.

Clues to the problems are written on cave walls, and sometimes can



Worra cute dragon, worra cute game.

MASK II

64/128
Gremlin
Price:
£9.99/cass
£14.99/disk

Yep, they're back again, in another game of the cartoon of the comic of the toy of the designer's money-spinning idea. And what an easy game it is. I have no objection to games that don't over-tax the mind, but *MASK II* is ridiculously simple. I managed to complete all the scenarios within ten minutes of working out how to control the vehicles.

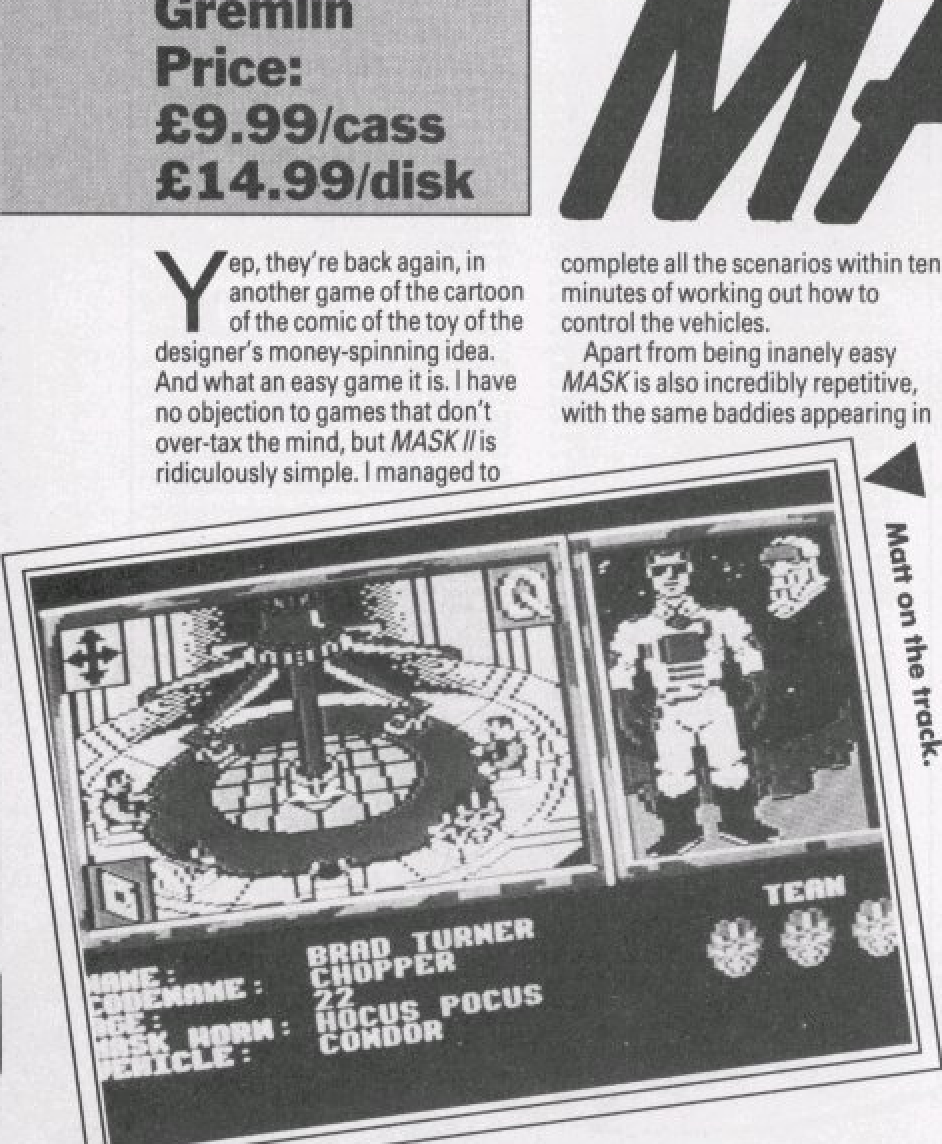
Apart from being inanely easy *MASK* is also incredibly repetitive, with the same baddies appearing in each scene, and each scene featuring the same graphic style, and the same obstacles. And the different tasks to be accomplished? Simple: collect an object. Nothing more to it. Collect a ruby, collect a bomb, or collect a president.

The text must have been written by an MP because it did a good job of convincing me that I was loading a good game. When I thought it had loaded I select my scenario and the team members I wanted with me, I hit the Go icon, and what do I find? *MASK II* loads in two long boring bits, without a loading piccy.

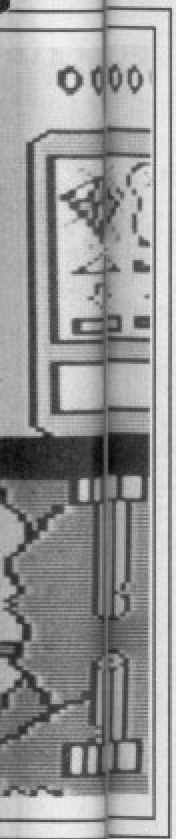
VENOM have risen once again, this time with plans even more fiendish than their previous fiendish plans. The first of these is to capture the President of the P.N.A. I decided to rescue the President before I tackled any of the other missions. To keep things nice and even I chose Matt Tracker and his gull-winged Thunder Hawk flying De Lorean, Dusty Hayes in his amphibious car called Gator, and Alex Sector in the almost unstoppable Rhino Juggernaut. Vroom, vroom and off we go. Oh dear, things are looking a bit like having to switch on the auto fire, what's that? Water? Better use Gator. A fifty foot cliff? No problem, just just use Thunder Hawk. After two minutes of this I came to a 40 foot high effergy of Ronald Reagan, collected it and returned to the drop-off point. End of scenario. The same degree of ease goes for the laser gun and oil crisis stories. And each time you complete a mission there's no reward, no sound, no congratulations, no pretty end screen, nothing.

It really looks as if *MASK*'s marketing managers couldn't care less about the quality of their product. Once a large number of people shell out their hard-earned, they'll be laughing. In this case it's the under-tens who are going to be suckers.

Mark Patterson



Matt on the track.



AGON

only be found by activating a prior clue, or a chest. In the text it suggests that life would be easier if you light any torches you find on your journey. You light them by giving them a good strong blast with a fireball, but unfortunately they go out after only a few seconds. But the major problem me and Asturias encountered was to do with the caverns being small and him being fat and wimpy.

I don't quite understand the meaning of the rainbow bit in the title, I could not find a single rainbow in the whole of the game. But I did find some very nice graphics. Asturias is very well defined, very smooth and very well animated, considering his size. The sound is up to scratch but does not extend to much beyond flapping noises and crashes.

Rainbow Dragon has got to be one of the best budget games I have played. It requires a lot of planning and a dash of luck when it comes to discovering hidden messages and illusions. I found myself getting more and more hooked each time I discovered a new message or new cavern. *Rainbow Dragon* is not a totally original concept, but it's one rarely seen nowadays. It reminds me of some of the old games which used to be available on the 64 about five years ago, except with a little more imagination. **Mark Patterson**

RAINBOW DRAGON — DIGITAL POINTS DISPLAY

VIDEO · AUDIO · TOUGHNESS · ENDURANCE · VFM

CU RATING **8**



▲

MASK II — DIGITAL POINTS DISPLAY

VIDEO · AUDIO · TOUGHNESS · ENDURANCE · VFM

CU RATING **1**

FRUIT MACHINE SIMULATOR

64/128
Code Masters
Price: £1.99

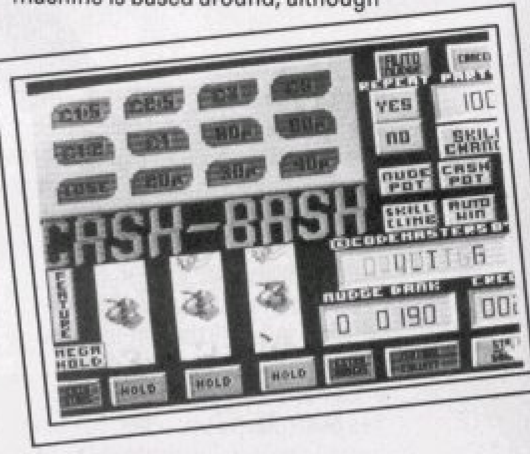
As a rule fruit machine games are usually fairly lousy. What could possibly be more boring than playing a basic fruit machine with nothing but "Holds" to amuse you, and no chance of winning anything at the end of it all. Code Masters have attempted to go one better than the rest of the fruit machine games by bringing out one that has all the realistic features of the fruit machines you would see today in the West End, rather than yesteryear's machine parked in the local chippy.

The object for most people when they play a fruit machine is to win money, so what is the point of putting it on computer? Today's fruit machines have many different games, sub-games, and features, some of which could even be considered remotely interesting.

The Codemaster's 'Cash Bash' machine pays out with the two or three fruits in a row type stuff as does any other machine, but the major difference is that the symbols on the reels of the Cash Bash machine have numbers on them. Each unit of the numbers shown lights up one letter of the word C.A.S.H.-B.A.S.H. If you fill up the word you are asked to choose a feature. But as anyone who has ever played a fruit machine will know, it's not so much choosing a feature as simply pressing the button at random because it flashes far too fast to judge.

The four features available to you are Nudge Pot: stop the nudges on anything between one and fifteen nudges, and then you can either auto nudge, gamble and nudges, or bank them and save them for a rainy day. Cash Bank: stop the flashing ten pence and earn yourself anything between 10p and £1.50. You may then gamble the cash you've earned, but only as far as £1.50. Skill Climb: this gives you the chance to use your amazing reflexes to earn some dosh. You must time pressing fire so that the cursor lands on one of the coins shown, rather than on a 'lose' light. The Auto Win feature is considerably lousy next to the other three, choose this and the reels automatically spin in to a winning position, and you receive a random amount.

This section is really what the machine is based around, although



there are many other sections. It has all the bog-standard fruit machine kinks such as hold, gamble, skill chance, mega-hold, and really most things you would expect to find on a genuine fruit-machine.

So full marks then to Code-Masters for authenticity, or whatever you want to call it. Nice scrolling reels, and some decent little tunes in there too. But even with all this stuff brilliantly executed, what has a fruit machine got that this hasn't? Money coming out of its tum, which to me is the only redeeming quality of these otherwise boring machines. I strongly suggest that no-one tries to bring out a perfect copy of a fruit machine until fruit machines get more interesting.

Ferdy Hamilton

FRUIT MACHINE SIMULATOR — DIGITAL POINTS DISPLAY

VIDEO · AUDIO · TOUGHNESS · ENDURANCE · VFM

CU RATING **6**

PSYCHO SOLIDER

64/128
Imagine
Price: £8.95/cass
Price: £12.95/disk

The heroine is back! *Psycho Solider* is the sequel to *Athena*, reviewed a couple of issues back, and is yet another SNK coin-op conversion from Imagine. This time the Amazonian wonder-woman appears on-screen as a cute schoolgirl with a pony-tail, which is a considerable improvement over her debut as a midget with a baseball cap. Even so, any resemblance between this diminutive sprite and the sultry strong-thewed beauty depicted in Bob Wakelin's cover artwork is laughably absent.

Once more Athena has been whisked into 'the demon-infested hell of an oppressed world', and once more 'the mantel of saviour has been placed upon her. Steeling herself against the unknown terrors . . . her stride, long and languid carries her into the shadows . . .'

Or to put it another way, she gets her dumpy little pegs moving and trots into a familiar scrolling platform scenario borrowed from all those *Commando* games we stopped playing about a year ago.

Though the screen display is a lot different from *Athena*, gameplay is in many ways similar. Our heroine scampers up, down and along the four horizontal corridors, dodging or destroying the approaching alien hordes, and banging away at brick walls whenever she gets the chance. These might hold valuable energy or additional bombs, or then again they might reveal nasty 'negative icons . . . especially the dreaded mushroom!' Don't say you haven't been warned.

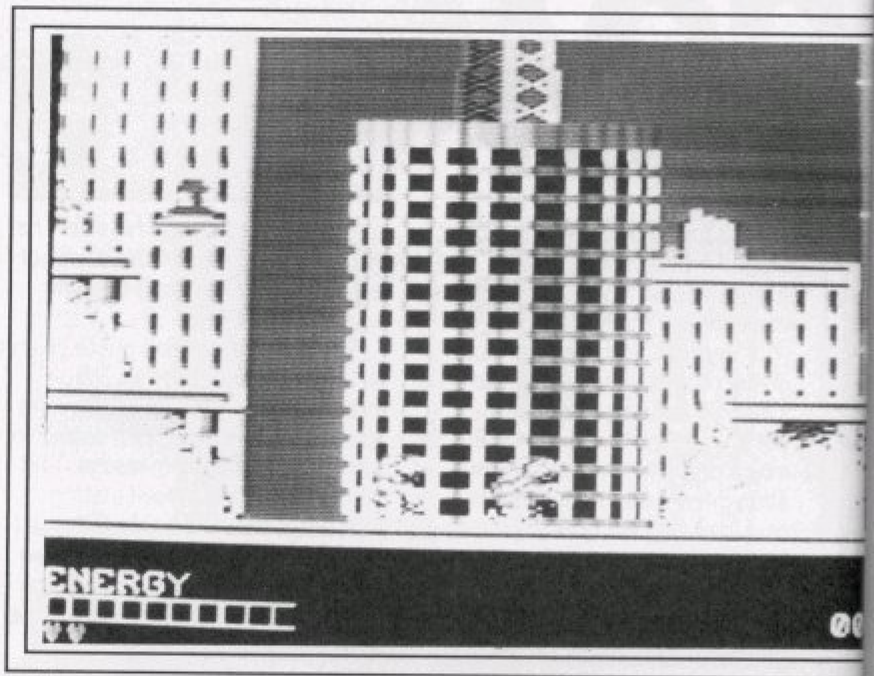
There are apparently 30 scrolling screens of this stuff in each of the six stages of the game, and Athena's only got the woefully inadequate five lives in which to hop, skip and pulverise her way through each of them. Just for good measure, at the end of each stage there's an innocent-looking apartment block which sprouts ferocious gargoyles. Athena's got to demolish this virtually stone by stone before she can reach the next stage. Not easy.

What prevents *Psycho Soldier* from being abysmally average is the wealth of hidden features, and trying to suss these out should have you guessing for a while. Bombs, for instance, possess differing destructive power depending on the amount of energy that Athena has amassed. The occasional blue globe transforms her into an invulnerable fire-spewing dragon, and there's also a wild card extra life to be found on various levels.

Perhaps these goodies were included at the expense of more mundane functions. The absence of a hi-score table is galling, and there's unfortunately no on-off toggle for the bland muzak. And I wish the bomb release wasn't activated by the space bar even when you're using a joystick.

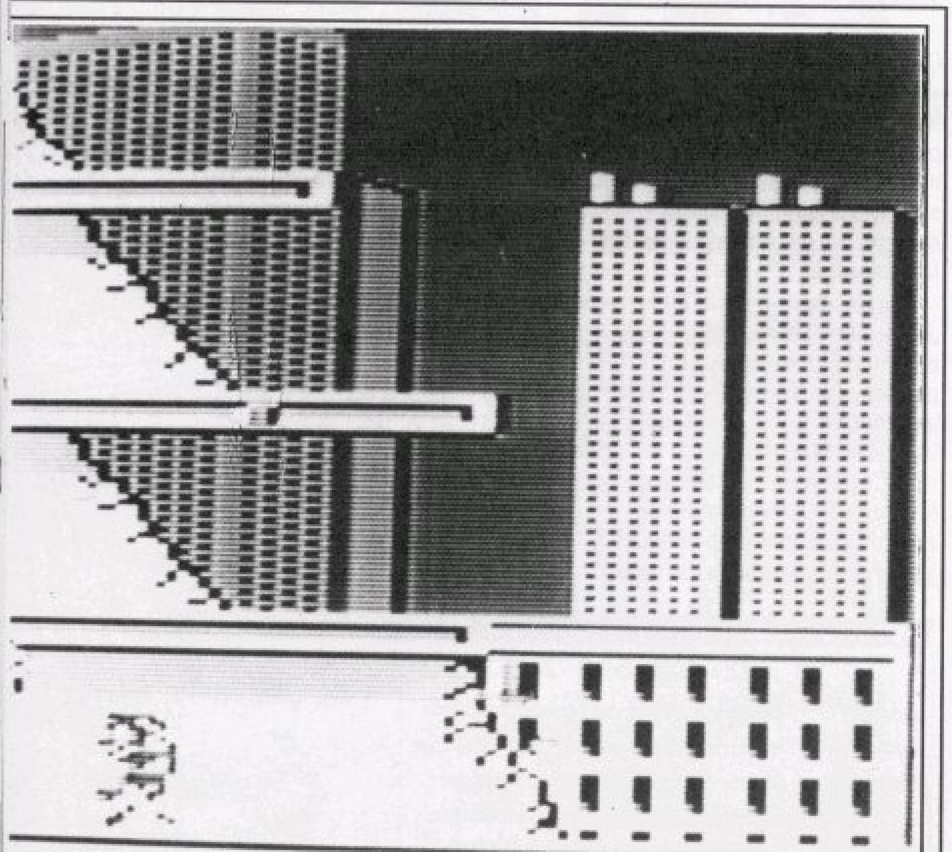
There's enough in *Pyscho Soldier* to keep you engrossed for an hour or two, and Imagine promises a surprise ending 'you can't afford to miss!' I reckon that you *can* afford to miss it, and for your pennies you'll probably find more addictive and absorbing entertainment elsewhere, rather than in this worthy but unexceptional performance based on a forgettable coin-op game.

Bill Scolding



▲ **Athena is back, bless her little pop sox.**

▼ **Can this girly save an oppressed world?**

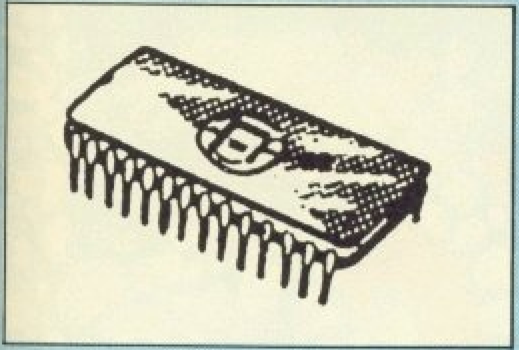


PSYCHO SOLDIER — *DIGITAL POINTS DISPLAY*

	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Video	7
Audio	5
Toughness	8
Endurance	6
VFM	5

CU RATING: 6

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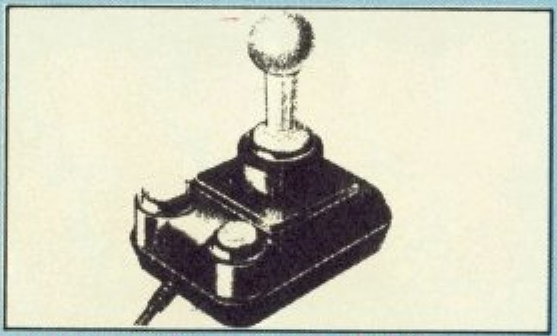
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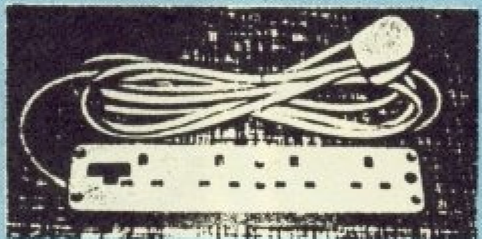
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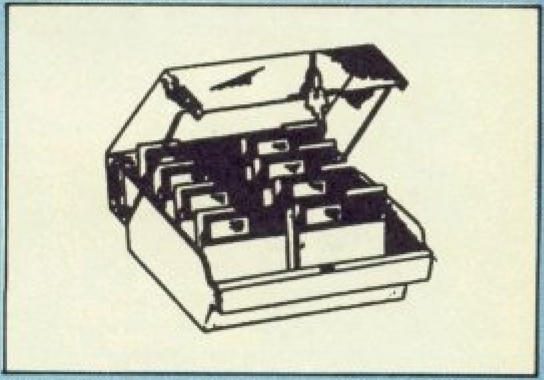
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MORPHEUS

64/128
Rainbird/ Grafgold
Price:
£14.95 (cass)
£17.95 (disk)

After nine months of intensive design and programming, followed by a three month legal tug o' war, Andrew Braybook's long awaited follow-up to *AlleyKat* finally sees the light of day. The reason for the lengthy gestation period is that *Morpheus* is far more involved than previous Brabrook offerings — it's much more than a run-of-the-mill blaster, which is why a hefty manual forms an integral part of the package.

The objective is to shut down the 50 levels of the *Morpheus* universe, and ultimately destroy Morpheus himself. Each level comprises a nucleus surrounded by an arrangement of orbitals, with aliens patrolling the vicinity. A level is completed by destroying the requisite number of orbitals, thus forcing the nucleus to shut down.

You start with a basic ship, armed with a single, orbital and alien destroying laser. Extra equipment can be bought and bolted onto the ship — provided you have sufficient funds and the ship's hull is large enough to support any additions. Points, and more importantly money are earned by shooting aliens and completing levels.

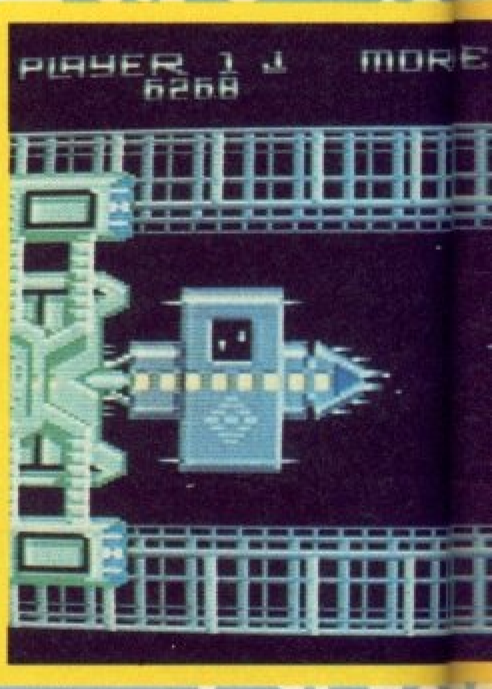
There are two types of equipment available: Weapons and Systems. The weaponry ranges from multi-directional, rapid fire laser guns to intelligent smart bombs and remote droids which can be controlled independently of the ship. On the Systems front there are shields, tracking devices, movement to energy converters, solar cells, devices to confuse aliens, and a host of other nifty hi-tech gadgetry. However, the equipment takes time to build, so you have to survive in space long enough to collect anything you've paid for in advance. This results in many tense moments, especially when your energy level is low and you're on the brink of death, fighting for survival.

The basic ship isn't capable of carrying any other weapons and can only support one extra system. So you have to buy one of the three larger hulls — the largest capable of carrying four weapons and seven systems.

Being able to modify the ship in this way is one of *Morpehus's* most appealing aspects. The feeling of power is unmatched as your ship gets bigger and bigger and more and more powerful. And you certainly need the equipment. As time passes, the aliens become more intelligent, and more aggressive with it. They also gradually become immune to older weaponry, which causes no end of problems when wounded aliens start spewing bullets everywhere. Fortunately, as the technology improves with time, so does the service, and it doesn't take too long to build other equipment.

The idea is to build the best ship possible before you take on Morpheus on level 50. However, by Timeslice 50 (roughly 100 minutes of play) no new equipment is produced, so you have to buy old stock, and by Timeslice 60 you simply can't buy any more weapons or systems. So, speed is of the

The smallest ship, about to launch from the base.



Going shopping . . . Mmm, Inertia Converters always come in handy.

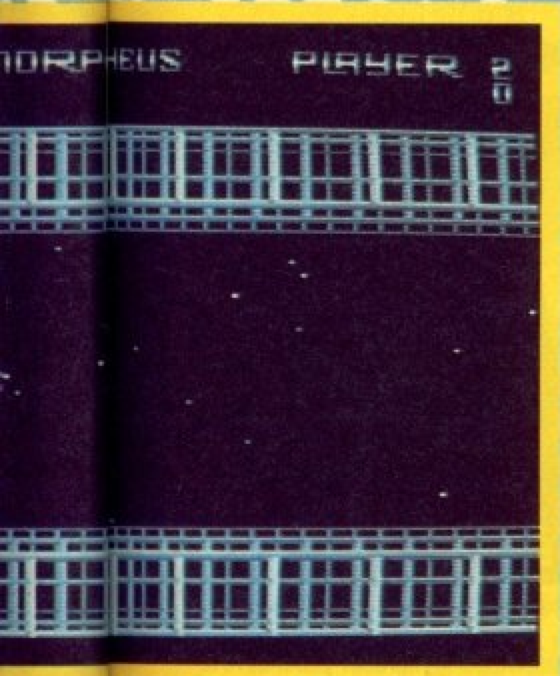


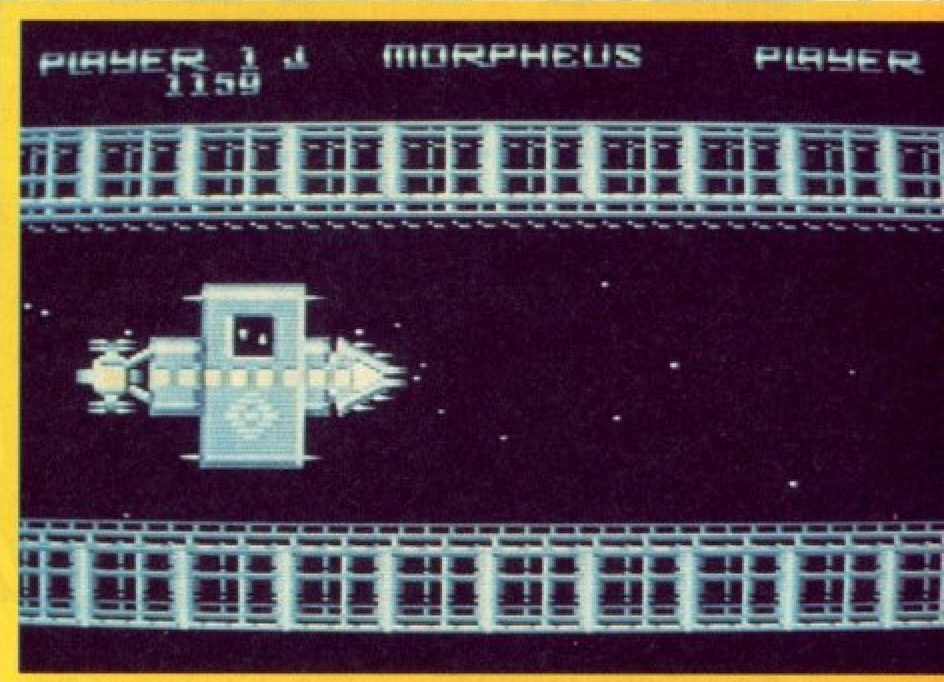




A bigger ship shoots an orbital, while chaos abounds.

And remember, son . . . be careful out there!





essence. It's not wise to hang around on the earlier levels for long, as when you get to the later levels the aliens prove far more formidable.

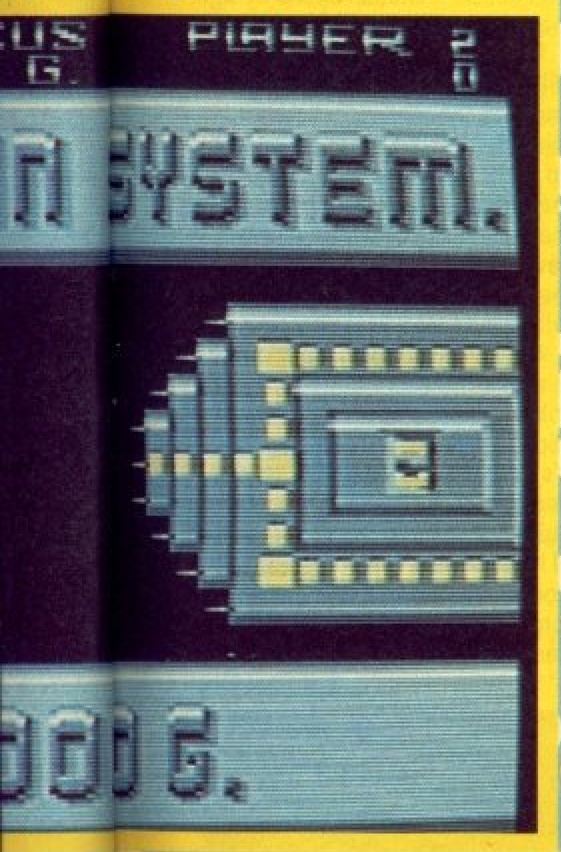
Morpheus is not a game which can be mastered in one easy sitting. It takes time to familiarise yourself with the inertial control mode and the unique playing environment, in particular the aliens and their many characteristics. The action varies from quiet and ominous to very hectic and nerve-racking, and the feeling of being there, in the thick of it all, is ever present. All the usual Braybrook polish is present, too, with a pleasant attract sequence and the ubiquitous plethora of options. Steve Turner's sound effects are first class, with an atmospheric heartbeat sound during play, and a piercing scream when the nucleus concedes defeat and shuts down the level.

Morpheus reeks of quality and the professionalism. Andrew Braybrook has excelled himself and produced his most playable and involved game to date. My only criticism is the lack of a load and game save facility — it's quite disheartening to build up a decent ship only to make one small mistake and lose everything. Still, there's a chance that the disk version at least may support this option.

It would be all too easy to overlook *Morpheus* and dismiss it after only a few plays. Its many subtleties are what make *Morpheus* so absorbing, and put it in the same class as such timeless classics as *Elite, Mercenary* and *The Sentinel.*

While it may well fail to appeal to shoot 'em up fans who like their action a little less subtle and more immediate, *Morpheus* will certainly enthral those who get hooked for many months to come.

Gary Penn



MORPHEUS

MORPHEUS — DIGITAL POINTS DISPLAY

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Video
Audio
Toughness
Endurance
VFM

CU RATING

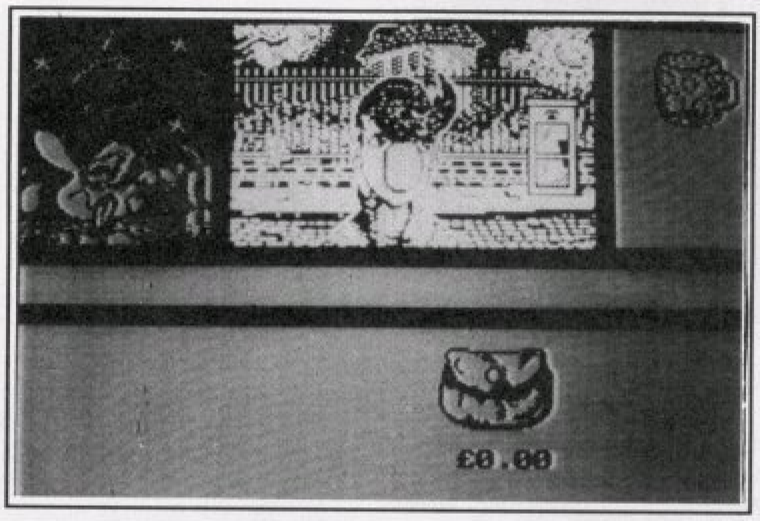
9

SIDEWALK

64/128
Infogames
Price:
£9.95/cass
£14.95/disk



▲ **Cruisin' for a bruisin' along the sidewalk.**



◀ **Duffed up by a rotter outside the phone box.**

While Andy Capp ambles along his Tyneside backstreets, a lone French biker is battling it out amongst the crumbling slums of the metropolis, hunting for the parts of his dismembered chopper (bike, that is).

Infogames' *Sidewalk* is, like Mirrorsoft's *Andy Capp*, a comic-strip arcade adventure with a bit of mugging thrown in for good measure, where 90 per cent of the action takes place on the streets, and where success depends, as always, on being in the right place at the right time, doing and saying the right things.

The graphics, however, couldn't be more different. The punks, heavies and hippies of *Sidewalk* are grotesque — the men sport immense phallic noses, leering grins and baleful eyes; the women stagger beneath the weight of mammaries the size of Rocky Ford catalogues, capped with nipples like big cherries. It's the violent, sexist style of the underground comic, where Fritz the Cat meets Gilbert Shelton's Fabulous Furry Freaks.

Both characters and the seedy scenery are highly detailed in monochrome — often *so* detailed that its tricky to make them out, as in the portrait of the chain-wielding gang members. Fortunately, too, most of the graphics are static, with only a small window for animation sandwiched between the pictures of the characters found at each location.

We see our 'hero' striding past corner shops, bars, graffiti-spattered walls and crossroads. And we soon get to see some urban violence when he takes on individual thugs in a very disappointing combat sequence.

The playing area is miniscule: a dozen or so locations linked by junctions. Yet moving through them is haphazard, and though there seemed to be some logical route from one street to another, finding it often defeated me.

The object of this frantic exploration is simple enough. The lone dude with the dangling proboscis has got until 7.30pm to find and assemble all the pieces of his stolen motorbike, and buy two tickets to the Bank Aid concert that he's taking his top-heavy girl to. She'll split with some bloke called John if he fails to get on his bike in time.

Equipped with a digital watch and a purse (*purse*?!!!) containing £50, he searches the scenery for hidden bike forks and the like, and attempts to persuade any thugs he encounters to part with any other bits in their possession. Below the screen are icons which allow you to choose the most appropriate action — ask questions, resort to violence or run for cover.

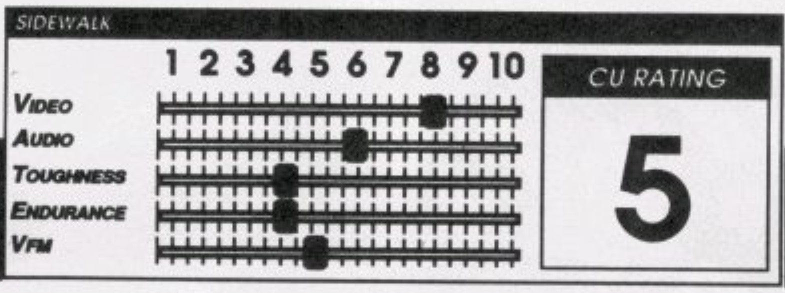
It's not always advisable to attack the thugs (who've all got macho names like Snake and Sumo). If your character loses, they'll grab any cash and bike parts that he's collected, as well as his watch, which means he'll have to foolishly ask every passer-by for the time. In any case, carefully and meekly talking to them will often reveal useful info.

The skill lies in performing the actions in the correct sequence, and in doing so you'll find that parts of the scenery will unlock, allowing your biker to meet the mechanic, the melon-toting punkette, or the stoned Germaine. And every time you attack a gang-member you'll have to visit the bar to top up your energy with booze — another similarity with the permanently squiffy Andy Capp.

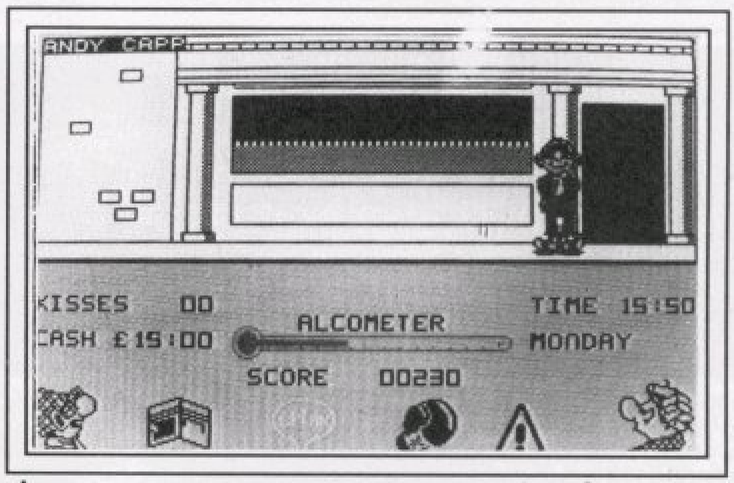
There's a lot in *Sidewalk* which will attract gamers — the unusual graphics, the relatively successful mix of logical puzzles and beat 'em up action — but it's main failing is that it's too easy by half. I reckon that a couple of evenings' play will have the game completed, and that's just not good enough for a full-priced game.

Worst of all is the boasting on the inlay that 'for each copy of *Sidewalk* sold Infogames will donate at least 15p to the Band Aid trust'. Big deal. It's a particularly warped sense of priority which tempts us to spend 10 quid on a game so that 1.5 per cent of it can be sent to starving Africans. You'll feel a hell of a lot better if you forget *Sidewalk* and send a tenner to Band Aid instead.

Bill Scolding

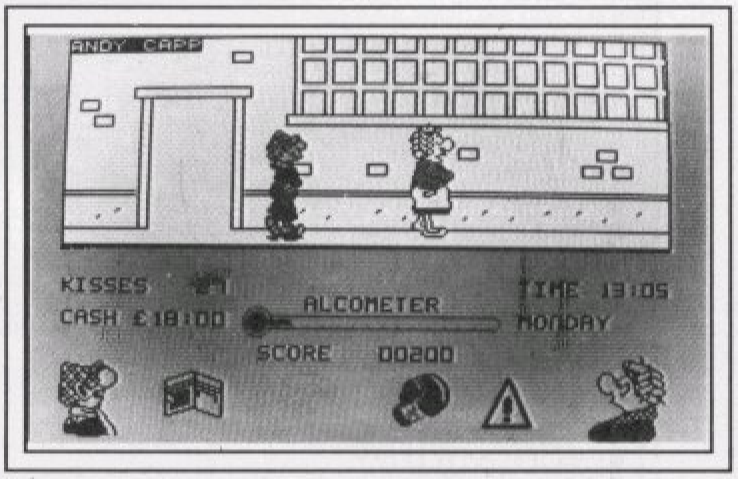


ANDY CAPP



Andy poses outside the local.





Pursue Flo' for some dosh.



Best get one in before last orders.



64/128
Mirrorsoft
Price:
£9.95/cass
£14.95/disk

For 30 years now that lovable layabout Andy Capp has been ducking and diving, scrounging and skiving, propping up the bar and dispensing wisdom to *Mirror* readers and admirers the world over.

And now Andy's starring in a computer game and the programmers have succeeded in producing an animated cartoon character who is *exactly* like the original. After years of unspeakable cartoon conversions, from Quicksilva's Flintstones to Melbourne House's Asterix, the software industry has finally coughed up a comic-strip character who wouldn't be instantly disowned by his creator.

Certainly the style of Reg Smythe's drawings — the simple line backgrounds, the clear sharp detail and the limited range of actions which Andy and his mates perform — is ideal for transferring to the computer screen, and the programming team (Blitter Animations) have thankfully avoided any attempt to add colour to the stark black and white images. Andy, Flo, Chalkie and the rest stroll through a monochrome world of terraced back streets, corner shops, brick walls and lamposts.

At the start of play we find Andy in his living room, uncharacteristically wide awake at six in the morning. he's also uncharacteristically got eight quid in his pocket. The game inlay tells us that Flo is waiting for Andy's dole cheque — which has unaccountably gone missing — and she threatens to be off to her mother's if it doesn't turn up.

And so Andy ambles off, hands in pockets, to see if he can scrounge a few readies and locate the wayward giro. A row of icons below the animation screen allow him to buy things, speak to other characters, duff them over, and examine and use any items collected along the way. Andy's also got a battery of devastating kisses to resort to in times of crisis. If he blows one at an approaching bobby the latter will be so stunned he'll stop dead in his tracks.

Though the playing area is only 80 screens or so, the number of corners and similar scenery will have Andy going round in circles if he just follows his nose. Once the streets are mapped, Andy will be able to take the shortest routes between the newsagents and the bookies, the Town Hall and the dole office, popping in for a quick jar en route.

Play soon boils down to the usual trial-and-error technique, as you get Andy endlessly trudging the pavements, bumping into the wrong people, asking the wrong questions, and arriving at pubs, shops and council offices just after they've closed. Things you might try include getting a loan off an unbelievably gullible newsagent, buying the *Racing Times* and placing a bet on the tip for Wednesday's races. This will be rewarded with the bookie handing over Andy's rent-book, and with this (and 20 quid) Andy can pay his arrears at the Town Hall.

Things to be avoided are any confrontations with Flo, the police or the rent collector. Though Andy might resort to fisticuffs in sticky situations — and even pick up some cash in the process — sooner or later he'll get imprisoned.

At all times it's essential to keep Andy's alcohol level topped up, so you've got to time his rambling so that he can sup a few jars during opening time, and if necessary, buy a take-out. Enough beer, and six hours' kip every day, will get you through what is, on the whole, a reasonably typical week in the life of Andy Capp.

Except there's one thing missing. Humour. There's not one laugh in the game, as far as I can see. The closest thing you get to a joke is a smart-ass one-liner from the woman in the dole office.

Despite all the fancy trimmings — near-perfect graphics and animation, the Hovis advert brass band music — what Mirrorsoft is serving up here is yet another tired explore-and-collect game. Mildly challenging and frequently tedious, *Andy Capp* is about as funny as being trapped in a lift with Gyles Brandreth.

Bill Scolding

ANDY CAPP — DIGITAL POINTS DISPLAY

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Video
Audio
Toughness
Endurance
VFM

CU RATING

6



Evesham Micros



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The speed and efficiency is **incredible**, who would believe that the humble old 1541 could load **202 blocks in less than 5 secs**. It is compatible with the majority of commercial software and can be switched out when necessary. One of the real pleasures of using this system is to use it with the likes of Easyscript & Superbase to speed up both the **normal loading and the sequential files**. It is important to point out that this is achieved using **standard** CBM disk format and not a special system, therefore you can still use your existing disks.

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Fitting involves fitting two sub assembly boards, one in the 64/128 and one in the 1541. Normally these just plug in but some '64s need a small amount of soldering.

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LETTERS

Brit' rule

In case he happens to be reading this mag I would just like to say this to the writer of the letter in last month's issue about a so called Anti-American feeling.

What you were saying was total crap. British games are of a very high standard (usually) and if you think that all of the reviewers in CU are so bad why do you buy the mag in the first place?

Now I've got that off my chest I'd like to say well done Mr Penn for some good reviews in the January ish.

Now for those who took part in the great Smartie Top debate I've another question why do BiC pens have a hole half way up?

Rik Living
Nr Bristol

Gary thanks you very much. "Thanks Rik" he says. As for BiC pens Mel Smith and Gryff Rhys Jones have that answer, but let's face it? Who uses them these days anyway.

Covers

I have been buying Commodore User for many months now and I would like to congratulate you on the quality of your covers and pull-out posters. They are of outstanding quality and extremely detailed and colourful.

In my view it is very important for a magazine to have a decent cover. It catches the eye of anyone browsing and encourages them to take it down off the shelf for a look.

My favourites being the Roadrunner and Combat School cover.

So whoever's responsible for creating these drawings, keep up the good work.

Jonathan Laycell
Ilminster,
Somerset

We like to keep our cover artwork to a high standard by using top artists. You'll note this month we have Rogue Trooper artist Brett Ewins working for us.

Spoilt kids

I am writing to air my views on the Kidsplay compilation. it will no doubt sell in vast quantities, but the question is, why? Will it be because of it's quality? No. The answer is simply because the proceeds are going to charity. All at the fault of the greedy sofware houses. Let me explain. . .

Firstly there is English Sofware, Melbourne House, Beyond and ANF software, who gave naff games to the compilation. They do this because it won't effect sales outside the compilation and won't lose any money.

Next, US Gold, Electronic Arts, Electric Dreams, Ariolasoft and Activision, they gave old games for the same reason that it won't effect outside sales. And so if the software houses are not gaining money they certainly aren't losing any!

If software houses continue to do this people will no longer buy charity compilations, so please buck your ideas up!

Dennis Barnfield
Northumberland

This is of course one side of the coin (op.) Remember the software houses were under no obligation to give anything. perhaps someone in the accused businesses would like to respond to this blast.

Wisdom

Did you know that CU and Wisdom Cricket Monthly come out on the same day every month? For about 2 years I have always anxiously read Wisdom first from cover to cover hoping that one month I would discover that Gloucestershire had signed up Javed Maindad to lead us to glory. CU has always been thrown in the corner for a week to be resurrected on many occasions the day after I had lashed out a tenner on High Street software which had been reviewed at "2 OVERALL" in the current magazine. My new year's resolution is to reverse my reading habits to avoid double disappointments. From 1988 onwards it's WISDOM BEFORE WISDEN.

M.E. Heasman
Cheltenham

Torture

Here's another letter to Mike Pattenden (– Again? JM). In the December issue a Thomas Brekk wrote about some ways to punish Nick 'Why-do-you-call-him-'Double dealer' " Kelly. In my opinion he would get off too easy, so I've sent this letter to give you some tips on punishment. You might try it out to see if it has the desired effect.

The umbrella trick. First you bend back the neck of the victim, Then you tke an umbrella and stick it down the throat. You now open the umbrella! (Whilst it's still in the throat). Don't bother if the victim makes a lot of strange and ugly sounds, they're supposed to.

The light-bulb trick. You use any normal light-bulb you have, and if you want to you can fill it with acid, garlic or termites. The next step is to force the victim to swallow the bulb. This is easily achieved by pointing a gun or walking round them in shiny leatherboots, holding a red-hot iron and screaming. When you've made it that far, kick him/her in the stomach.

The Fat Wrestler trick. The most simple. You hire a fat, snarling wrestler to jump on the victim's more sensitive body parts as eyes, tongue, brain and belly. — Simple but very entertaining.

By the way of the road, Mike, do you hate Nick's dog? You wrote that you wanted it dead! Does it chew on your joystick cable and pee on your wordprocessor? Or are you one of those guys who hates animals and assassinates them in dark alleys?

Anonymous
Sweden

What a strange person you are. MP hates dogs because they make him sneeze.

Bobble's brill

What can I say? Your mag just gets better! Not only do we get more great posters (more Jerry Paris please!), the best arcades column in the world (yay Nick, you're the best) Hotshots, which is undoubtedly the best column anywhere. We also get personalities (ie. someone who is rather famous) in each mag. I must admit I've never heard of Tony Cottee before (whoops! there goes my chance of star letter!) but *Bubble Bubble* was, and still is my all time favourite game. Thank you, Firebird for the brilliant conversion.

I do have a complaint, however, about the letters complaining about the complaining letters. Really huge, keep on printing them, I love seeing idiots being slagged off, especially bigots. My other complaint concerns your competitions, it takes all British mags a long time to get here and by that time the comp's finished ages ago. There are so many compo's I would have just liked the satisfaction of simply entering.

Remember the picture you had Mr Paris draw for the Boobarian (copyright Mike "I kill myself sometimes" Pattenden) review a number of months bach? Well could he do more of these drawings in the review pages?

E.C.C.A
Sydney,
Australia.

Watch out for Bubble Bobble on the Amiga. Sorry no Jerry Paris illustrations in the pipeline.



Blind owl

What really niggles me is the fact that certain reviewers are unable merely to pass comments upon software, be it constructive or otherwise without treating

readers to a dose of their oh so funny and remarkably mature wit, gosh they're so trendy and incredibly streetwise god bless them!, I bet they are a real boon at parties and other social gatherings.

Good old Ferdy made a really well-reasearched comment in his "review" of Gary Lineker's Superstar Soccer when he mentioned the "long hard pointless boot towards the goal in true Sheff Wed fashion", and then proceeded to name the teams whom in his opinion play neat little balls.

I would like to remind "Donkey" that the "pointless boot" recently stuffed Q.P.R. 3 goals to 1, the pointless boot have knocked West Ham out of the cup for two successive seasons. . . on the trot, once at Upton Park, not to mention league victories. As for Bristol City, where did the player who is doing all their goal scoring come from?? Crikey, the team who use, the long pointless boot. Come to think of it where did QPR'S leading scorer for the last few seasons come from. . . . can you remember Donkey old mate???

I would like to ask Mr Hamilton if he watches Wednesday on a regular basis and if, as I suspect, the answer is no, how he can come out with such a derogatory statement about a football team he can see at the most four times a year?

No doubt Ferdy will offer a really profound statement about QPR's and Wednesday's league positions, but I've got a crisp hard earned tenner that says the Owls finish above QPR and West Ham at the end of this season. How about it "Donkey"?

Incidentially the recent comic feature was disgusting and should never have been printed, I am sure you will be aware of the strip to which I refer, this garbage is no doubt bought by weak minded youngsters who think that anything that uses bad language is incredibly trendy, I'm sure that you will agree (will you?) that this is not so and that stuff like this should not be given exposure in a quality mag such as CU. Up the Owls.
N. Smith
Chesterfield

Sorry you didn't like the comics feature, the air must be so clean on Hillsborough's terraces. Ferdy's point about 'the long pointless boot' is fair comment. No-one's denying that it doesn't get results. But who wants that kind of result? And yes we do like Viz. Rude words 'n' all. Puerile aren't we?



Complainant

● I am one of millions of Australian C.U. fans. I just received your October issue on the 19th of December.

By the way, why didn't you come to Australia when you did your arcade map?

Do you know how stupid all of your readers sound when they complain about things like that. A good example is how a few readers took your drink chart seriously.
Glenn Twiddle
Ipswich

Poster claim

● In your December issue, you advertised your forthcoming January issue (you know, the one with the free poster.) The one paragraph boasted a spectacular gift if anyone spotted the CU crew in the free poster. Well, I spotted Mike Pattenden in the bottom left-hand corner. In the Sega *Afterburner* cabinet there is a skeleton. These rotten human remains must belong to Hotshots who has been playing his personal fave for so long that he's wasted away. Therefore, I claim my prize.
Neal Hudson
Sutton Coldfield

That wasn't Hotshots in the *Afterburner* cabinet, it was the ghost of Eugene Lacey.

Coin-op

● Please could you tell me how much a coin-op is like *Gauntlet, Afterburner, Out Run* etc. And where do you get them from and if you cannot buy them can you rent one? I am asking this because I want one plus I'll be the envy of all my mates.
David Greenwood
Todmorden
Lancs

You *can* buy coin-ops, but be warned they come pretty expensive. Afterburner is the most expensive yet. It'll set you back a cool £10,000. Have you got that kind of dosh? Of course there are cheaper ones and you can even get them second-hand from distributors or through adverts in the arcade trade mags. You're still talking hundreds of quid.



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INTO THE VALLEY

DEJA VU

BY KEITH CAMPBELL

Mindscape/ Mirrorsoft
64/128
Price: £14.95/ disk
Amiga
Price: £29.95



In the washroom, feeling rough.

Deja Vu is a most unusual adventure, driven almost exclusively by joystick. Nevertheless, it is a text adventure, not an arcade adventure! Let me explain.

The screen consists of three main windows. The graphics window shows a pictorial representation of the current location. A window below it conveys the text narrative, plus any messages in response to commands like EXAMINE. The inventory window, to the right, is used to deposit objects shown in the graphics window that have been TAKEn.

Above these windows is a collection of verb boxes, and below the inventory window is an exits window.

Control is effected through an arrow which can be moved and superimposed over any part of the screen, by means of the joystick. Amiga users will be familiar with this GEM-type system, but it is likely that C-64 owners will not. Once the arrow is positioned, the fire button is used to issue that command.

For example, to take an object that is displayed in the picture, the arrow is placed over it, and the button held down. The joystick is then moved to 'drag' the object into the inventory window, and releasing the fire button 'drops' the object into the inventory. No words are used at all.

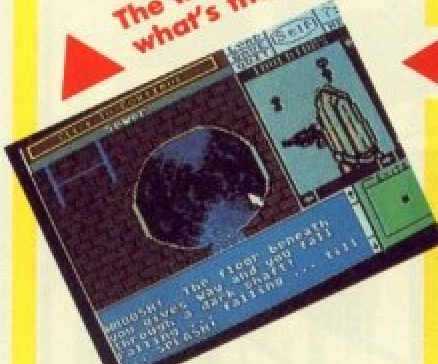
To issue a 'real' command, a verb from one of the verb boxes is pointed to with the arrow, and the fire button clicked. It is then linked with an object to the main picture, or perhaps, the inventory. So to unlock a door, OPERATE is selected as the verb, then KEY in the inventory is clicked-on, followed by the door to be unlocked in the picture.

There are OPEN windows, too. If you OPEN the coat, a little coat window springs up over part of the picture, showing the contents of its pockets. If there are too many objects to display, the scroll boxes can be used to scroll down through the contents. Taking this one stage further, you may decide to open a wallet found in the coat, and so you will now have two 'open' windows at the same time.

The plot is that of a mystery thriller.



The weird room, what's that chair for?



Down the elevator shaft to the sewer.

Finding yourself in the toilet cubicle of Joe's Bar after closing time, you have suffered a total loss of memory. Locked doors prevent you from escaping, and soon you stumble upon a corpse in an upstairs office. His face is vaguely familiar, but you can't quite place him. Are you being framed for the murder — or did you actually commit it? You don't know, and you can't remember.

Playing an adventure sitting back with joystick in hand makes a welcome change from a lot of keyboard bashing. However, whilst there are simply no difficulties in finding the words you need, the vocabulary, limited to eight verbs, inevitably leads to a find/examine/do series of problems, rather than those of a more subtle and varied type.



Who killed him, not you, or was it?

I played the C-64 version, and one or two quirks in the way it operated caused a little frustration. The arrow moves smoothly enough across the screen, but its speed varies depending upon where it is. It is therefore difficult to exercise a fine control, and placing the arrow accurately in a small area takes some doing. Double clicking on exits usually takes you through them without having to resort to the GO icon, but often I found I had to give the button two or three more clicks to get myself moving.

The high Graphics rating reflects the cleverly laid out screen and system of controls and boxes, rather than staggeringly artistic pictures. The Playability rating takes account of the lack of fine control over the arrow. These ratings, and comments on the operation of the game, refer to the C-64 version. Play should be significantly superior on the Amiga version.

For something different, *Deja Vu* is worth trying, and in any event, makes a worthwhile adventure.

GRAPHICS:	9
PLAYABILITY:	7
PUZZLEABILITY:	7
OVERALL:	7

INTO THE VALLEY

BY KEITH CAMPBELL

VENOM

Mastertronic 64/128 Price: £1.99

Adventures always seem to come in runs. If there's one new Infocom game released, it's a good bet that it's one of a pair. This month sees two icon-driven joystick adventures. But Mindscape's *Deja Vu* is one thing, whilst *Venom*, from Mastertronic, cannot even be described as a poor man's budget alternative.

Here's the screen layout. From top left to bottom: location picture top left (and nothing to write home about); then a right-to-left single-line scrolling 'commentary' (for want of a better description); selected word display below that; followed by about five lines of text right across the bottom. To the top right is a two-column set of verb icons, and below that, a set of character icons.

It seems that whoever wrote the program, realised at the last minute that not all the necessary verbs would fit on the list, and so it is split into two blocks separated by a SCROLL icon. Each of the displayed verbs can be selected, but operating the SCROLL icon toggles the lower block over to an alternative set replaced by selecting a SCROLL icon that separates the two blocks.

Commands are entered by moving a highlight around with the joystick to select a verb. The highlight then moves into either the characters present window, or the main text window, for selection of the object. There is no control over any element in the picture.

The joystick does not give very fine control over movement of the highlight, and most of the time I found I was overshooting my target word. Just when I thought I had mastered the controls, and decided to drink that glass of ale the landlord of the Dancing Drayman was carrying, I found that the game was, after all, virtually unplayable.

GULP is the word I chose, and promisingly the moving banner announced 'consume consume consume' endlessly. But for some obscure reason, GOLD was written into the band below, and all sign of the lighlight 'cursor' disappeared. After a few minutes furious button-pressing, I finally wrested control back from the computer, but still remain doubtful as to how I did it.

The plot is one of those 'overthrow the evil one' sagas, in a boringly timeless setting somewhere between the days of Greek mythology and the Middle Ages. If you buy the game and want to read up the background, then make sure you have a magnifying glass, as unlike the list of 'other great Mastertronic games . . .' on the back page of the inlay, the actual instructions are eyesight-destroying minute. But who cares about instructions, when there's all those other great Mastertronic games to read about . . .

GRAPHICS:	5
PLAYABILITY:	4
PUZZLEABILITY:	5
OVERALL:	7

FOOTBALL FRENZY

Alternative Software 64/128 Price: £1.99 cass

With Grimsditch Rangers due to play in the cup final in three days time, the team are in fine fettle and raring to go.

"What could possibly go wrong?" asks the inlay.

What indeed? As manager, I could find very little to worry about, save a pile of bills dumped on my office desk by my secretary. Funny thing, that — you have to go through my office to get to hers. I thought it was always supposed to be the other way round.

Confusing things, offices, especially when you have to go west to leave through an east exit. Still, some sort of explanation will turn up later in the game, I'll be bound.

I read through the bills and discovered that one of them was for the Electricity *Company*!!! (The shape of things to come, or just wishful thinking on the part of the pro-privatisation author?). So I had a wander around town. The bank manager was out so I couldn't get a loan to pay the bills. Perhaps I didn't even need one? Returning to the ground, and having little else to do, I decided to position one of the players in Saturday's big match, grabbed a ball and strolled out onto the pitch to kick it around.

"You haven't time to mess about like that", chided the program.

Not to worry, life goes on, and no problems are presenting themselves. What can go wrong? I didn't know at the start, and I'm still none the wiser now. The instructions give nothing away save the vocabulary.

Here we have a budget adventure that looks decidedly GACked. Some locations have graphics but many pictures are clones. I can't say that I was particularly motivated to hang about and wait for something to happen, for nothing about the game particularly grabbed me.

But then, this is the last review for this month and out of the corner of my eye I can see *Border Zone* on the shelf, lined up for the next issue…

GRAPHICS:	5
PLAYABILITY:	6
PUZZLEABILITY:	4
OVERALL:	6

INTO THE VALLEY

MICROMUD

Virgin Games/ Mosaic 64/128 Price: n/a

MicroMud is a single user simulation of *MUD,* the famous Multi-User Dungeon, which originally ran on the Essex University computer. *MUD* is available commercially nowadays, along with other multi-user adventures, notably Micronet's *Shades.* To play these, you need comunications software and a modem for your own particular computer, plus a telephone socket within easy reach of your setup, and, of course, an ID and password enabling you to get into the appropriate system.

Ignoring the capital outlay for the necessary hardware, to play one of these games is fairly expensive. There's the annual subscription, the charge levied for time connected to the game, possibly a charge for time connected to the system on which the game runs, and the telephone call charges, usually at local rate, appropriate to the time of day.

Whilst with careful use of the system, by logging in during off-peak hours, this need not cost too much, the careless or addicted user can run up some frightening bills. And it is easy to get addicted.

If addiction sets in, it is ongoing, for unlike a conventional adventure, there is no real 'ending' to a multi-user adventure — there can't be, by its very nature. Typically, eight or ten players can join in each session, and there may be a number of simultaneous sessions running to accomodate the demand at any given time. Points are scored by collecting and depositing treasures in a designated place, by fighting and winning, and by carrying out certain special tasks. An object can only be possessed by one player, or 'persona' at a time, and once deposited, a treasure ceases to be available.

Thus it becomes necessary for the game to be reset every so often, typically more frequently than hourly, and the dungeon starts afresh. Only the points score and other characteristics of the players are retained, so most of the fun and enjoyment is gained from the interaction with other personae. You can speak to them within the game, help them, or fight them, so playing becomes more a fantasy existence than a head-bashing adventure.

The objective in all this is to increase one's point score to become a Wizard or Arch Wizard, and then a whole new dimension opens up. For Wiz's have special powers — they can invoke all sorts of powers over the other players. Effectively, they police the game, and can throw players off the system for using bad language, for example. Their powers range from changing rooms around, to pointing the Finger Of Death at someone deemed to be a real baddie.

A baddie is classed as someone who goes around killing indiscriminately — this is bad for the viability of the game, since every time you are killed your point score reduces. If you have reached a very high status after many hours of play, being reduced to a novice may make you give up playing. There is a paradox here, in that points are awarded for successful attacks!

What has all this to do with *MicroMud?* Because *MicroMud* is such a realistic simulation of the real *MUD,* it is necessary to get an understanding of the workings of a true multi-user game.

The 'other players' in *MicroMud* are effectively 'intelligent mobiles' or computer generated characters who respond in a way approaching the real live players in *MUD.* Ten of these, from a possible selection of one hundered, will join you in the game.

The game is played in real time, and the movies move around in the same way as you. Just as in the real thing, when one enters your location, you get a message like: CLAIRE THE NECROMANCESS HAS JUST ARRIVED. And if Claire reaches the Woodman's Hut before you, chances are she'll make off with the very axe you were after. Before long she may well be asking for your help — and perhaps your score will benefit if your are able to give it.

As in *MUD,* treasures must be dropped in the swamp to register points and increase the player's status. If you like magic you'll find a whole range of spells at your command, and over 400 rooms to practise them in. In all, the game boasts over 250 objects, and over 500 words understood by the intelligent mobiles.

MicroMud was developed by Jon Stuart and Paul McCraken on a BBC micro with a second processor, with only 64 owners in mind — there are simply not enough two processor BBC systems around to make the original commercially viable. However, with the recent growth in the 16-bit market, it is just possible that Amiga owners will get their own version eventually.

Playing *MicroMud* feels extremely like playing the real thing, and it's a whole lot cheaper. One thing, though — you will never get to meet the other participants, as you might at, say, a *Shades* 'meet'. That could just be another advantage . . .

GRAPHICS:	n/a
PLAYABILITY:	8
PUZZLEABILITY:	5
OVERALL:	7

CAMPBELL'S COMMENT

When Activision came to the rescue of Infocom, ailing due to the financial disaster not of its adventures but a PC database product known as Cornerstone, adventurers' initial reaction was one of concern. The takeover was seen as likely to be detrimental to the quality of Infocom products, with pressure to introduce graphics, and, perhaps, to 'popularise' their games in other ways. 'Popularising' would, of course, mean appealing to the lowest common denominator.

However, to the contrary, things actually started improving. Infocom titles were a lot easier to find and to buy. Visits from the Infocom team to Activision in the UK afforded adventure columnists the opportunity to meet them, interview them, and thus to bring their readers closer to what had, until then, been a rather remote company.

But then it happened! Our worst fears, it seems, albeit in a different form, were justified after all. Activision decided to clear its warehouse of Infocom stock, dumping it on retailers at a fraction of its real worth. Nice if you managed to pick up a bargain (and quite a few did) but a bargain unlikely to be repeated, for these titles are now destined to stay out of stock. Not so nice for the people who didn't, and not so nice for the future of Infocom adventures.

"Why did they do this?" asks the open-mouthed reader. A rumour echoing round the Valley suggests that SOMEONE had failed to meet his target turnover figure for the quarter, and panicked into picking up a few more hundred pounds by shifting something at any cost. And guess what? The best games in the warehouse were the first to go!

The most appalling thing is that it shows a complete lack of understanding of the adventure market. Slow-moving stock these packages may have been. But adventures last, and last, and last. People buy the new 16-bit computers, owners of disk drives for the first time, perhaps, still want a copy of Zork — written some six or seven years ago. Bet there's not one single arcade game around that could boast a record like that! But sadly, for the time being at least, Zork is just three of the titles that are no longer available in ANY format in the UK.

A letter from Valley reader John Clayton this month relates a dialogue he had with Mastertronic, about Kentilla. "They seemed surprised that the game should still be one sale anywhere, claiming that it is a very old game . . ." he wrote.

One can only assume that some of the bug boys in the games software industry just do not understand that adventures are the classics, not the pops, of computer games. They may not sell millions overnight, but neither do they date so quickly. Interest in them does not vanish overnight. Perhaps arcade-house persons (especially those short of their targets) should read a few adventure columes, particularly the Helplines, and learn just how much continuing interest there is in a wide range of some very old games.

INTO THE VALLEY

INTO THE VALLEY

BY KEITH CAMPBELL

COLOUR OF MAGIC:
If you talk to the guard he will tell you where Twoflower is. Free him, but WAIT when you confront the baddies.

NEVERENDING STORY:
To open the ornate door, SAY PLEASE.

FRANKENSTEIN:
Can't get out? Take a seat and wait!

RING OF POWER:
Water the bean seed to climb the cliff.

MASTER OF THE UNIVERSE:
Examine the alcove, and examine the posts.

NECRIS DOME:
Mandroid killing:

- **Reception 3 — push caskets**
- **Reception 8 — make magnet with cell, coil and bar**
- **Reception 10 — hit water pipe with axe**
- **Reception 11 — throw mandroid into refuse unit**
- **China 1 — open oil drum and shoot at-lan gun at pool of oil**
- **Africas 7 — Fill helmet with acid and throw at mandroid**

It is the bleeper that draws you into the matter inversion chamber.

JINXTER:
One squeaky runner alerts another. Water expands when frozen.

RESCUE

IT'S ALWAYS GRATIFYING to receive help in response to problems that are mentioned in the Valley. It means that even if we couldn't answer you directly when you first wrote, eventually you get the clue you need, thanks to the helpful nature of other *Commodore User* readers. So don't hesitate to let us know if you are in trouble, and keep the clues rolling in as well!

This month we have Mr. R. Smith, of Milton Keynes to thank for more than one useful tip. In *Shadows Of Mordor*, says Mr. Smith, a lot of people seem to be making the mistake of building the raft in the same place as they found the logs. Wrong! This is not the way to do it! As Sam, you should drag the logs to the edge of the swamp one at a time, and then make the raft. Using the pole, you can then POLE RAFT SOUTH. But, adds Mr. Smith, you will have to make two journeys, as the raft will only carry two people at a time.

Another explanation of a vexing problem, concerns the use of the wedge, in *Quest For The Holy Grail*. 'Don't drop it at the castle door, just carry it when you want to enter," he explains. "It is safe to drop the wedge outside the castle . . . but don't carry it past the three-headed knight or he will take it from you and eat it!" More clues from Mr. Smith appear in the clues section.

Now here's a puzzler concerning *Kayleth*. David May of Hitchin, has the Essence of Tae necessary to kill Kayleth, but he can't get into the space ship. Whenever he uses the Azap chamber to go to the ship, he gets the message: "There's no air in this section of Kromar, you cannot breath!" And he promptly dies! What's he doing wrong?

Talking of *Kayleth*, among my Christmas cards this year was an extremely welcome one from Ann and Stefan Ufnowski. "More power to your elbow for the only decent adventure column left in existence . . ." wrote Ann. You've got me blushing now, Ann, but no doubt I'll get over it when I've shown your letter to the new boss, and squeezed an extra grand a month out of him.

Ann and Stefan expressed their mortification at not getting to be at the ADBIN ADventurer's BINge (see Campbell's Comment, December *CU*). Sorry about that. Next time you're on — but only on condition that in the meantime you've written a follow-on to *Rebel Planet* and *Kayleth*, both well-loved adventures simply crying out for a successor!

Enough pleasantries! Down to more serious stuff. And what could be more serious than someone stuck in an adventure for which Valley Rescue can offer no service? Goblin Towers is the game, and Philip Geaning the name. Philip is by a hook at the cliff edge, without a rope. Ooo-er!

Kai Arve Maren of Ovre Ardal in Norway, knows there is a secret in his bedroom, but can't get at it. Anyone else with bedroom problems? (Three hours detention playing NAPM, NAPL you at the back!) Look under *Masters Of The Universe* in the clues section.

Finally, thanks to John Clayton of Ampney Crucis, for his detailed help with *Necris Dome*.

News

INFOCOM SCHEDULES

Amiga owners will have to wait a bit longer for latest releases of Infocom games. Activision's policy is now to release IBM PC and Commodore 64 versions first, followed by Amiga later. The Amiga versions of the two "BZ's" — Beyond Zork and Border Zone, should be appearing during March.

Meanwhile, Infocom adventures have dropped in price. For 'normal' interactive fiction, C-64 disks, previously £24.99, will retail at £19.99, whilst Amiga titles will drop from £29.99 to £24.99.

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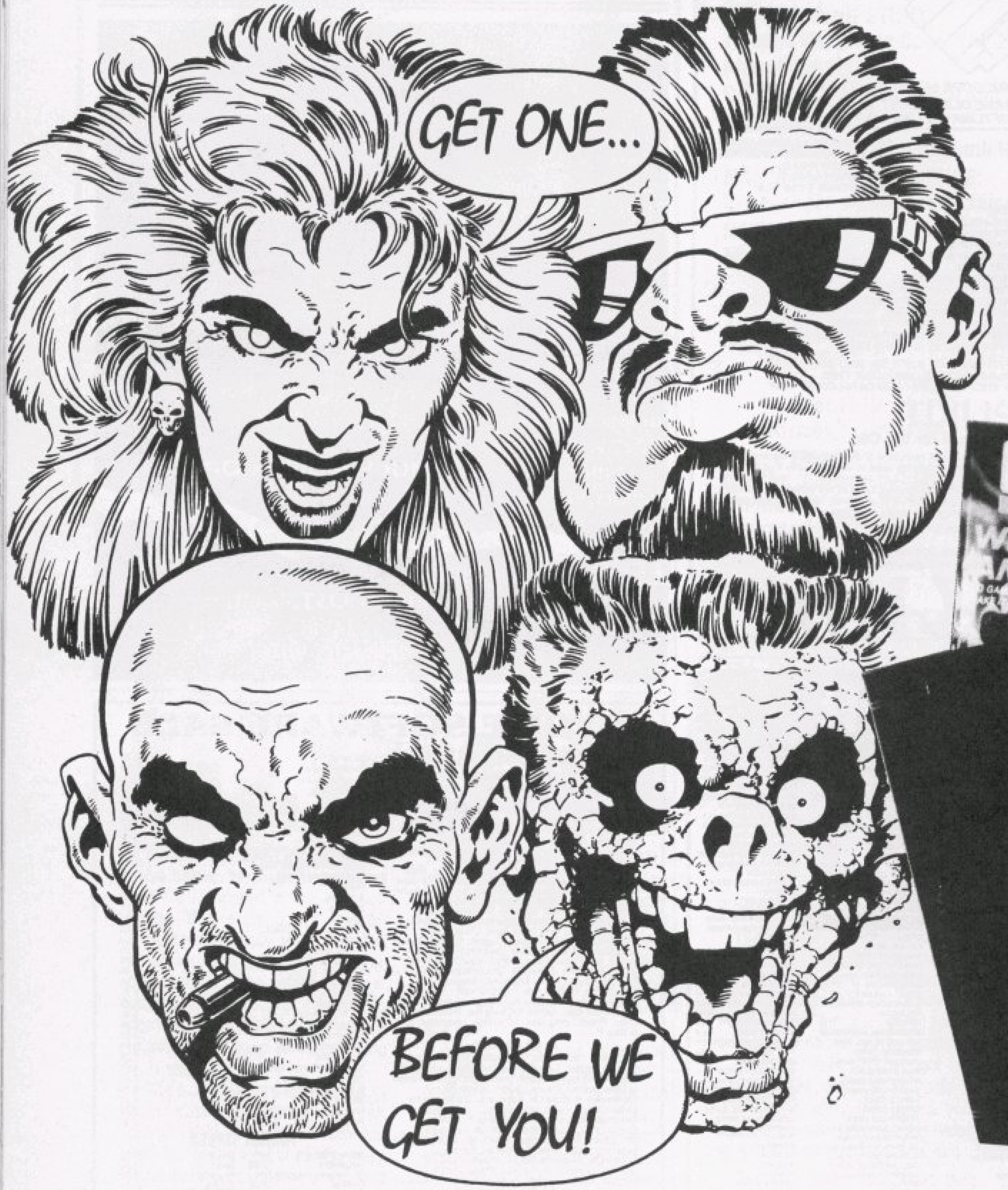
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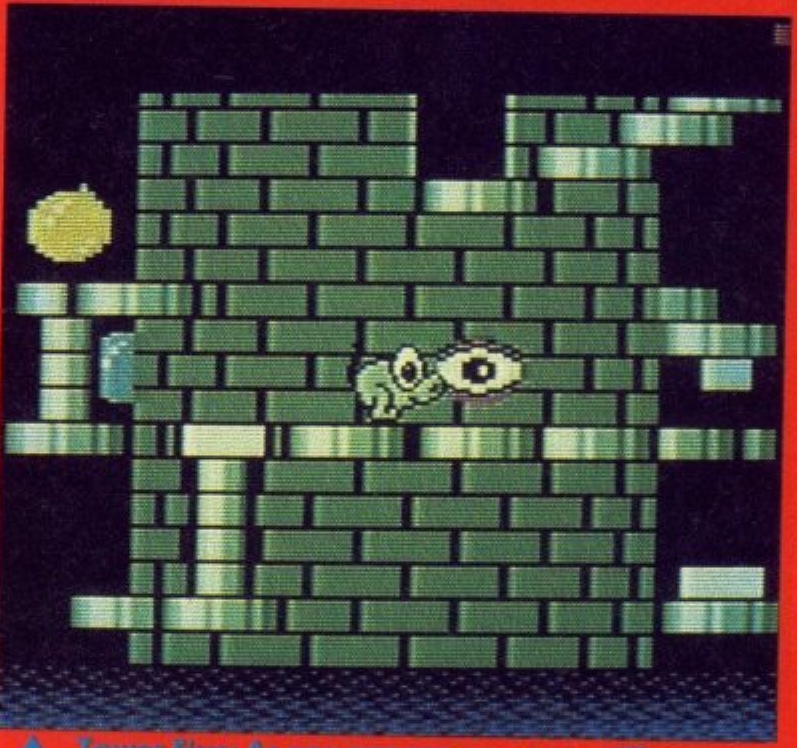


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Tower Five: As you can see, you can sniff the aliens' armpits and get away with it . . .

NEBULUS

Well, here it is. The definitive, detailed and down-right delicious low-down on how to complete one of the most innovative and addictive games of 1987, courtesy of *Nebulus* aficionado, Gary Penn.

Tower One: The Tower Of Eyes

Go through the tunnel entrance to your right, then run under the eye as it moves upwards. Get on the lift and go up and through the tunnel. Walk right and go up on the lift. If you perform the above quickly enough, the spinning alien should just miss you.

Don't worry about the grey bubble — it won't touch you. Go up on the lift to the right, then turn and shoot the two flashing blocks. Walk left and shoot the bouncing bubble. Climb the steps and walk under the eye as it moves up. Go through the tunnel and shoot the bubble to your right as soon as you appear on the other side. Use the lift to the right, then walk left and fall when the bubble bounces away from you. Shoot the bubble and walk under the eye as it moves up. Walk left and fall through the disappearing platforms onto the lift. Make a mental note of the position of the grey bubble above, before you fall onto the left, and imagine its movement so you can time your ascent.

When you think the bubble's moving to the right, go up on the lift. This way you should avoid being knocked down.

Jump the platform immediately to your right — it disappears if you tread on it. Now walk right, go through the tunnel entrance and use the elevator to your left when you appear on the other side of the tower. Go up, through the tunnel to your left, then enter the tunnel to your left when you appear on the other side. That's the first tower completed! Coo.

Tower Two: The Realm Of Robots

Jump the two gaps to the left, then go up on the lift. As soon as the sphere moves down, jump it. Go through the tunnel and run under the sphere as it moves up. Keep climbing the steps — don't stop now — to avoid the sphere which appears near the top. Go up on the lift and through the tunnel to the left. Jump the red sphere as it moves down, then go up on the lift. You can wait for a spinning alien to knock you down so you can walk under the sphere, but you lose two technique points if you do so.

Walk left and under the sphere as it moves up. Be warned: the platforms to the right of this alien push you in the opposite direction. Walk down the steps and go up on the lift when you reach it.

Go through the tunnel to your left, then go up on the lift to your left when you reappear on the other side. The two spheres at the top of this tower can prove difficult to avoid. As soon as the first sphere moves right and passes over your head, walk left, up the steps, and don't stop until you reach a safe spot between steps (two adjacent platforms).

Wait for the next sphere to move right, then climb the steps until you reach the platform just below and to the right of the exit at the top. You see, the platform above the lift disappears, so wait until the sphere pops around the corner before falling onto the lift. Now go up and through the door to finish the level.

General Tips

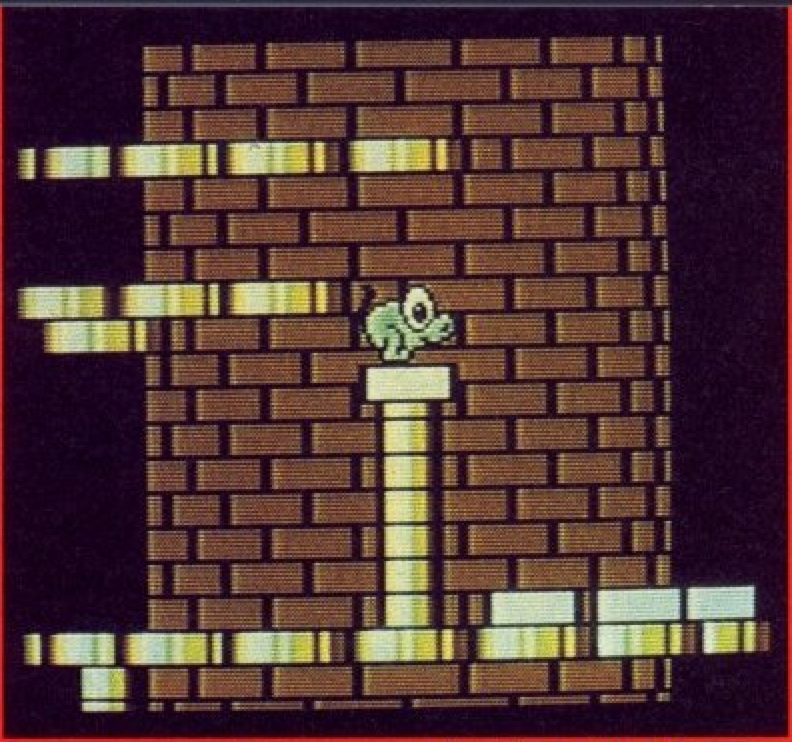
The spinning aliens make a regular appearance (unless there are four aliens already on screen). Anticipate their arrival so you can avoid them with ease. The best technique is to stand by a tunnel entrance when a spinning alien appears, then enter the tunnel when the alien is almost upon you. As the tower revolves, the alien will fly harmlessly by.

You may or may not realise, but you don't have to be precisely positioned to go through the tunnels or to use a lift. So, you can enter a tunnel or move a lift with only a foot in or on it. A useful thing to know in a tight situation.

Technique And Extra Bonuses

A maximum of 100 Technique bonus points are awarded if you get to the top of the tower without getting knocked down. Two bonus points are lost each time you get hit, so be careful out there. Extras are given for shooting the bubbles and the flashing blocks. How nice.

by Gary Penn



Tower Six: Oo-er, a tricky bit. Go Pogo. Go!

Tower Three: The Trap Of Tricks

Walk left and shoot the bubble. Go through the first tunnel you meet, then get on the lift and move up past the yellow bubble, onto the level above it. Walk right and wait for the spinning alien to appear. Let it hit you so you are knocked down onto the level below. Shoot the bubble, then keep walking right until the platform disappears beneath you.

Get on the lift and go up. Walk left, then go through the tunnel so you fall down on the other side. Go up on the lift, then walk left under the aliens and go up on the lift if nothing's coming. Fall left and wait for the alien to move right and pass above you. Now walk left. Shoot the blocks, then walk left and fall down onto the lift.

Go up and through the tunnel, then immediately walk left and go through the door. Walk left and get on the lift. Go up and into the tunnel to finish this level.

Tower Four: The Slippery Slide

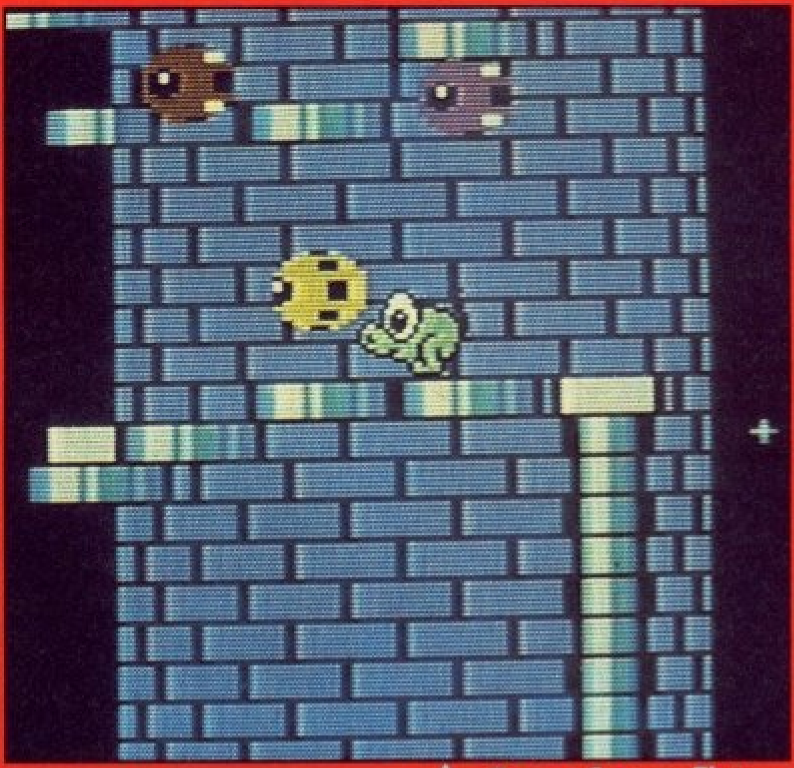
Walk right, up the steps, and jump the aliens when they move down. Go up on the lift and shoot the flashing block to the right. Walk left, shoot one of the blocks, then allow yourself to get pushed back by the slippery platforms before walking left again and shooting the other block. NB: don't forget to stop moving left when you fire, otherwise you'll jump.

Walk left and climb on the lift as quickly as possible. Now, you can either wait for the spinning alien to appear before moving up, or, you can go up and enter the tunnel to the left when the spinning alien gets near.

Having gone through the tunnel, walk left and jump the middle platform (otherwise it disappears). Follow the route round to the left, then go up on the lift. Walk left and go through the tunnel. Walk under the aliens on the other side and shoot the top block. Now go through the tunnel. Turn right when you appear on the other side and shoot the top block. Now go through the tunnel to the left and shoot the bubble when you reappear.

Walk left and shoot the other flashing block, then walk right, back through the tunnel and up the steps. Fall onto the lift and go up. Shoot the bubble. Walk right and go up on the lift when the alien moves left. This prevents it getting trapped to the right, which is unhelpful. Wait until the alien moves left again, then fall left onto the platform below. Walk right and jump the gap (this may require several attempts to get it right).

Go through the tunnel and climb the steps to the left. Wait for the left-hand alien to start moving up just after the nearest alien moves up, then climb the steps without stopping. Erm, actually, stop when you reach a flat bit comprising three platforms. Jump the middle platform (it disappears, see) then climb the step and shoot the bubble immediately. Now walk onto the lift and go up. Walk and fall right when the bubbles bounce right (beware: they do tend to bounce off each other, and one might just bounce back straight into you). Shoot both bubbles and walk right. DON'T step on the 'tower' of disappearing platforms — jump it, then walk right. Wait for a spinning alien to come along and knock you on to the level below, then walk right and get on the lift. Go up, walk left and go through the tunnel and ... you've done the fourth tower!



Tower Seven: The four lifts at the top of the tower. Pogo uses the first lift to make good his escape.

Tower Five: The Broken Path

Here's where the going gets tough — and you get going. Use the lift to the right to move up one level. Walk up to the eye, so your nose actually touches it. When it moves up, run under it and jump the platform immediately to the right (it must be said that this is not easy). Shoot the flashing block to the right, then fall down onto the lift. Go up, climb the steps and go through the tunnel.

Wait until the eye is about to pass over your head, then climb the step and go up on the lift. Incidentally, you can actually climb the first two steps without getting hit by the eye.

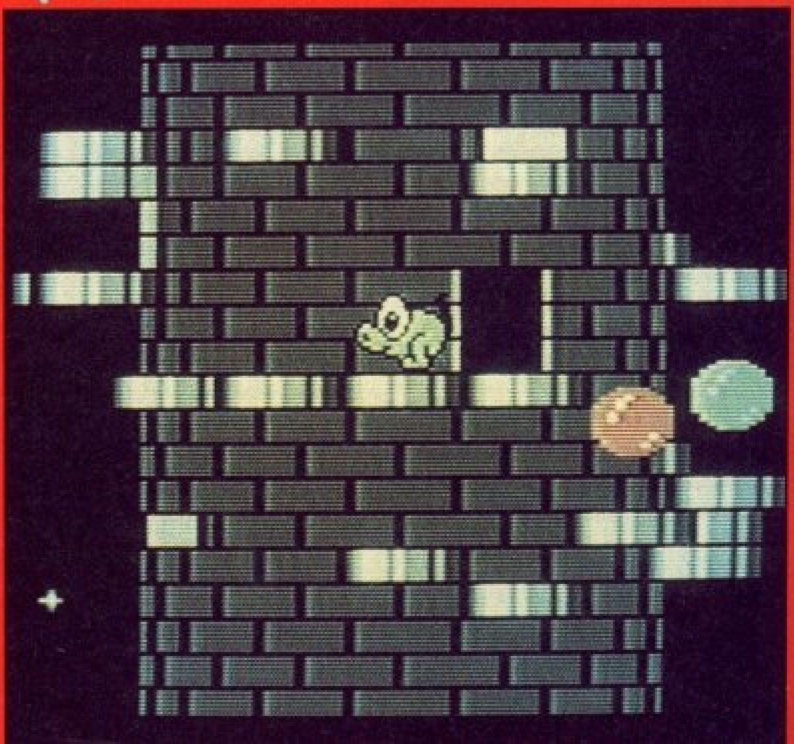
Jump left (watch out for the eye coming round. You've got just enough time to make two jumps once it's passed over your head). Fall left, onto the nearest platform — it will disappear. Shoot the flashing blocks to your left. Right, here's a nice little tip: go up on the lift and get knocked down when you hit your head on the platform higher up. Why? 'Cos it makes the sphere below disappear, and thus it's easier to get back up.

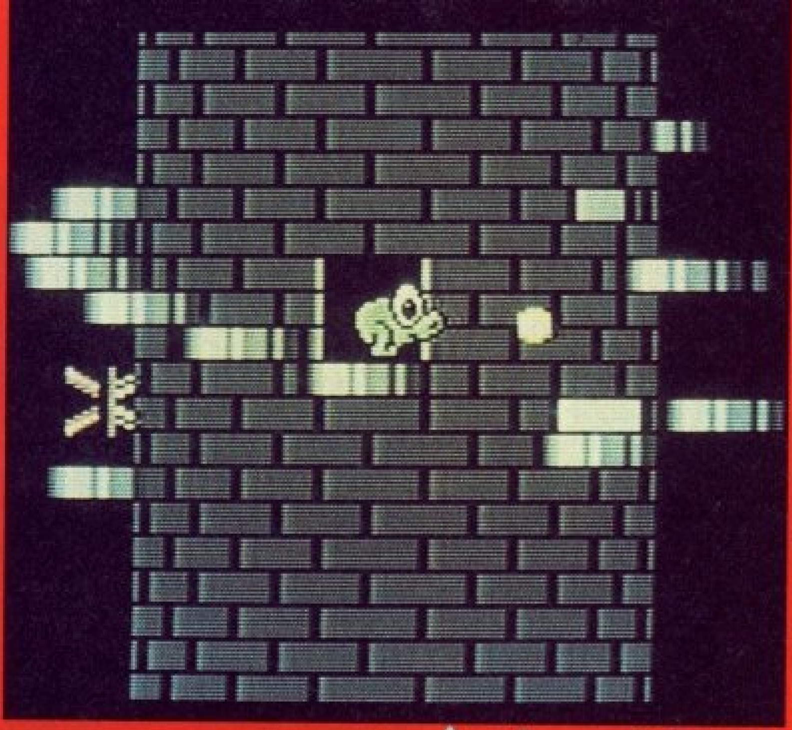
Get back to the point where you shot the blocks, only this time fall onto the left-hand platform — it will disappear — then go up on the lift. Walk left and jump the gaps. Jump the first eye as it moves down, then shoot the block to your left. Jump right, back over the eye, then fall right, onto the lift below.

Go up. jump left when the lift stops (don't jump right, the platforms disappear) then walk under the eye. Fall onto the lift and go up. Walk left and wait for a spinning alien to come along and knock you down. If a spinning alien doesn't make an appearance, jump right, fall to the level below and jump the gap to the left.

Climb the steps when the eye goes away, then fall left. Walk

Tower Eight: But which of the three exits is genuine?





Tower Eight: Jump from this platform onto the end platform and fall through to the block below.

under the eyes and climb onto the lift. When the coast is clear, go up and through the tunnel. Climb the steps to the right, under the eye, and go through the fourth tunnel. When you reappear, climb right, under the eye (watch out, it sometimes hits another eye and comes down sooner than it should), and go through the third tunnel. Wait for the eye circling the tower to the left, then follow it (if the eye refuses to move left, head for the lift to the left as soon as the eye passes over your head. Be quick now, or you'll find yourself knocked down). Anyway, go up on the lift and walk left. Shoot the two bubbles before walking under the eyes when they move up. Go up on the lift and through the tunnel to your left, and you've conquered the fifth tower. Nicely done, my son.

Tower Six: Swimmer's Delight

Walk right and go up on the lift, then walk right and jump the gap. Walk under the spheres when the nearest one goes up and the furthest goes down. Turn left and walk under the sphere as it moves up. Shoot the flashing block, then walk right until you reach the lift. Go up and shoot the block to your right (move to the edge of the lift to do this.) Walk left, under the sphere, then jump right. Go up on the lift and shoot the block to your right. Get back onto the lift and go down. Walk right and fall under the sphere as it moves up. Now go up on the lift, then walk right and fall onto the lift below.

Go up, walk left onto the lift, then go up again. Walk right, up the steps, and go through the first tunnel you meet. Walk left and jump up the steps. Jump the sphere and go through the tunnel. When you reappear, go up on the lift to the left, then jump right onto the 'tower' of disappearing platforms. When all the platforms have disappeared, go up on the left-hand lift. Walk right and shoot the block. Turn around, get back onto the lift and go down.

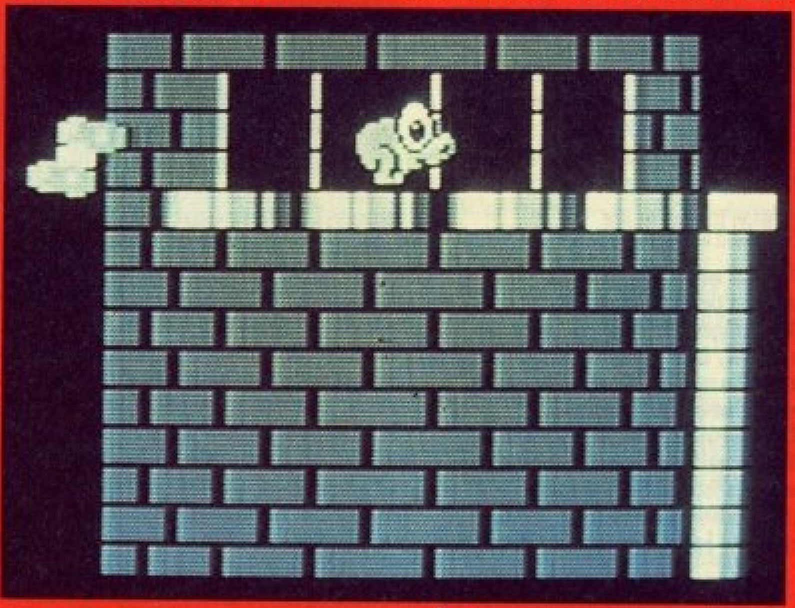
Go up on the right-hand lift then walk right. Go up on the lift, walk right and go up on the next lift. Now you have to walk under the three spheres to your left. This isn't easy. Wait for the nearest sphere to go up as the middle sphere goes up and the furthest sphere goes down. Now make a break for it. If this doesn't work, keep trying. Go up on the lift. Now here comes the really tricky bit...

Jump the sphere when it moves down (this requires practice or luck — or both), then jump up the steps — BUT DON'T STOP 'TIL YOU REACH THE TOP! Enter the tunnel. Cripes! You've finished the sixth tower.

Tower Seven: The Nasty One

Climb the steps to your right and fall through the disappearing platform onto the lift below.Wait for the alien to move left, then move up, once. Walk right and fall through the disappearing platform. Jump right, off the lift below the block, then jump onto the left-hand lift. Go up and shoot the flashing block, then walk left and fall through the disappearing platform onto the lift. Go up as high as possible on the lowest lift and shoot the block to the left.

Walk right, all the way around (watch out for the aliens)and go up on the lift. Go up on the lift to the right and get onto the next lift to the right. Go up, walk right, and wait for the alien to move up so you can walk under it. Wait on the platform to the right of the alien moving up and down. Now, the lower platforms all disappear, so you have to jump them as you walk right around to the other side of the tower. It's best to wait



Tower Eight: 'Freeing' the lift at the top of the tower . . .

for the alien moving around the tower to be moving right so you can follow it around the tower and avoid being knocked down by it. Got that? Great. When the alien moving around the tower bumps into the alien moving up and down, it changes direction. Go for it.

When you reach the lift, go up on it. Walk right (watch out for the high speed alien moving around the tower). It may be of interest to note that you can 'hide' in the lowest platforms until it has passed over your head. Anyway, when you reach the lift, go up, then walk under the aliens as they move up. Go to the fourth lift and go up. Walk right until you fall through the disappearing platform. Walk left onto the disappearing platform, the walk right once you've fallen through to the level below. Go up on the third lift, then walk right and fall through the disappearing platform. Go back to the four lifts and use the first lift to go up. Walk left onto the lift, then goup and through the tunnel to finish the seventh tower. Hoorah.

The Eight: The Edge Of Doom

Ooer, the last tower. The final frontier. Actually, it's not as difficult to conquer as the previous level (huge sigh of relief). OK, here we go...

Wait for the four aliens to bounce off the bottom platforms TWICE, then run for all you're worth underneath them. Go up on the first lift and walk left. Go through the tunnel and walk left when you reappear. Oh yes, stop before your reach the last platform. Don't tread on it, it disappears. What you have to do is jump onto it from the second platform from the right. Go that? not the platform next to the end platform. The one next to that one.

You should now be standing on a block. Jump right, turn left and shoot the block. Fall left onto the lift below, then go up, walk left and go through the tunnel. Walk right, up the steps, and jump right until you reach a lift. Go up and jump left, over the aliens which have just appeared, until you reach a lift. Shoot the block to your left, then go up, and through the tunnel.

Jump left, twice, and go through the tunnel. Walk right and shoot the block. Jump left, onto the lift, and go up. Jump left, then walk left onto the 'tower' of disappearing platforms. Go up on the lift once the platforms have disappeared, then go up again. Walk left and shoot the block, then walk right, around the tower, and fall through the gap onto the lift (watch out for the alien).

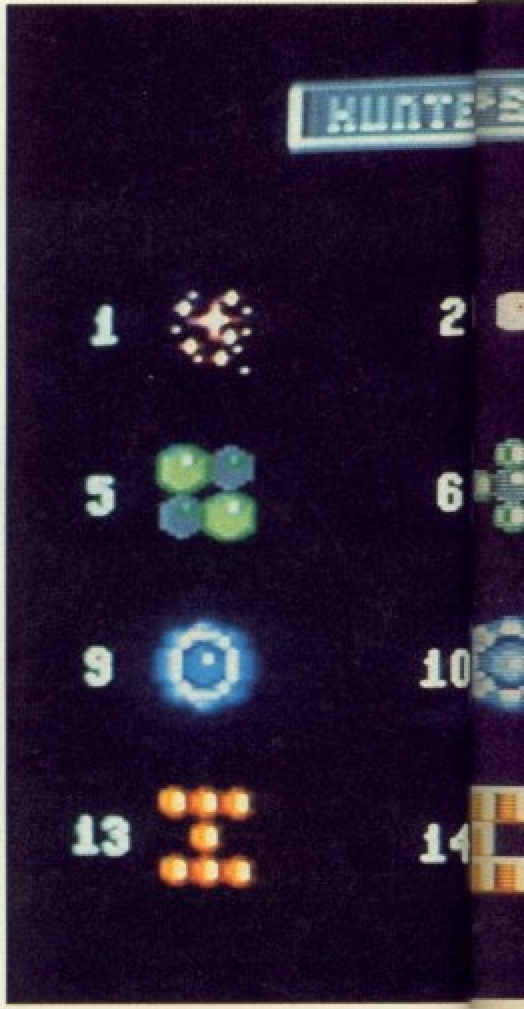
Go up, walk right and fall down. Walk left, then turn right and shoot the block. Get onto the lift and go up. Walk left under the aliens as they move up, then go through the tunnel. Shoot the block to the right, then walk left until you can't walk any further. Fall onto the platform to the left, then jump left, twice. Shoot the block. Get knocked down (or jump back to the lift), then make your way back to the lift you have just 'freed'. Go up on the lift ... and pick a tunnel. Yes, only one of the four tunnels is the exit. And I'm not going to tell you which one ...

Oh, alright — it's the third from the right.

HUNTER'S MOON



Continuing our series of hints and tips by the people who brought you the games, we asked Martin Walker, the man that stepped into the programming hot seat at Thalamus, to give us his very own player's guide to *Hunter's Moon*.



ENGINES

When first starting the game, experiment with the available engines. I've watched quite a few people plan *Hunter's* now and there seems to be a fairly even split of preferences. I like Cruise mode as you can cruise forward easily but get maximum speed when you need it. Turbo is ideal if you think you're Rambo and like powering through small gaps with a worker scraping your bows. Retros are favoured by the careful player — some puzzle levels are best tackled by switching to this control mode, and the game defaults to this on power-up. The current engine type is displayed in the Status Symbol.

STARMAP

These are designed to allow you to proceed in any direction. When you highlight a level, the Level Gauge in the middle of the lower Infobar will show its number. Remember the tricky levels (for you) and avoid going that way in future if you want to get to further starmaps. I nearly always lose a craft on level 6!

BONUS GAME

Early qualification for this is the secret of getting a long way into the game. When you first enter a level, one starcell on your radar will be flashing. Try to get to this before the Status Symbol counts down to zero — if you do, a flash of blue will show that one digit of Loopspace is yours. Once all four digits have been won you will enter the bonus game whether the rest of the system is complete or not. Although this won't help unduly with Starmap One, from Two onwards you can start skipping tricky levels, and later on in the game it is possible to finish a system containing 13 levels after only completing four of them!

The bonus game itself is selected randomly from 8 possible types. Tactics largely depend on which comes up, but three things are worth bearing in mind.

1. Keep those lasers firing at all times!
2. Always pick off the workers closest to the Hunter.
3. If you are still alive after 30 seconds you'll get an extra craft and Perma-shield anyway — so hang in there!

PERMA-SHIELDS

You start each game with one of these, and an extra one is earned at the end of each bonus game whether you last the course or not. Use them wisely, and the following hints may be useful.

1. As they last right through a level once selected (unless your ship is destroyed) select as soon as you enter a particularly tricky level.
2. Once selected, try to ignore the spores (they can't hurt you) and concentrate on avoiding the workers only.
3. When your extra craft gauge shows zero, don't take chances in tight spots — get those shields up and try to gain an extra craft by passing the next 10,000 points or completing the next bonus game.

GENERAL HINTS & TIPS

★ On first entering a level no spores will be launched for five seconds — use this time to take in your surroundings and decide which is the quickest way to the flashing starcell.
★ Active cells are dropped by workers only while they are on-screen. In long corridors therefore, cruise along in the opposite direction to workers or in the same direction, but slightly ahead so spores are always launched out of range.
★ When you are faced with many active cells, and need to bide your time before blasting into an intricate structure — back off. Once off-screen all active cells are removed and you can then return to the same spot for another try.
★ If all cells dropped by a specific worker seem active, ignore them. Real active cells are dropped only occasionally. Levels 1 and 2 show this in

PLAY TO WIN

BY GARY PENN



action — they look pretty, but don't shoot back!

★ From System 8 onwards any of the special features may be found, including some surprises. (Watch out for homing wormcells!)

CELL TYPES (SEE SCREENSHOT)

1. *Starcells* — These are the rulers of the colony and also hold the navigational information needed to get to the next star system. They are absorbed on contact with the Hunter, and the resultant energy surge renders it immune to spores for five seconds.

2. *Workers* — Single white cells which grow the colony. They are totally invulnerable and although not aggressive will always destroy the Hunter on impact. Avoid at all costs!!

3. *Spores* — Launched by all active defender cells, they vary according to which cell launches them. Some will home in or circle round.

4. *Cellmass* — Soft, spongy and easily blasted, these throb with colour when active.

5. *Petrifiers* — So dense that lasers don't touch them. Only when active can a path be blasted through them.

6. *Metalbeads* — Easily destroyed, and not very active. (Obviously developed by the workers as an early prototype).

7. *Superbeads* — An improved version of 6, these have evolved the ability to aim their spores accurately. Take care and keep dodging to confuse them!

8. *Sprayers* — The first of the supercells, these fire up to 8 spores simultaneously in all directions. (Not very energy conscious — but deadly all the same). Try to shoot them as soon as they become active to be safe.

9. *Knightcell* — Possibly the most deadly of all. Be careful! They are highly agressive, and their spores home in with great speed. You can weave and dodge to shake these off, but unless you know the level it may be best to use a permashield.

10. *Eyeballs* — An armoured design which needs 2 hits to destroy. These are fairly easy to combat except when they become active, then they hurl spores in all directions as fast as possible.

11. *Doublecross* — A second generation armour plated cell. Many hits to destroy and semi-homing spores as well. Try to line up both lasers on a single cell as it will then explode in half the time. Again a permashield can be invaluable if things aren't going too well.

12. *Armourcell* — The ultimate of its type, it is totally indestructible, whether active or not. You can however deactivate any cell using lasers. This can be useful when you are sitting waiting for a worker to pass.

13. *Metalworm* — The first of the nomadic wormcells. These were created to travel more freely than the larger varieties.

14. *Wrecktangle* — No reaction to lasers at all. It may be possible to blast through where another type of cell crosses these.

15. *Darkworm* — Although the wormcells themselves are inactive, the workers dropping them will launch spores. Darkworm workers are able to aim accurately, so beware!

16. *Spotworm* — The final variety, and particularly vicious too. Spotworm workers will hurl everything they can in all directions.

SPECIAL FEATURES

★ PUZZLES

From System 4 onwards. These normally involve a special trick to complete — the first of these is level 16 which is fairly easy once you work out how to blast through the walls.

★ WORMCELLS

From System 5 onwards. Wormcells can move freely and either have fixed length 'tails' or continue growing all the time. The first city of twisted metal appears in level 25. This is tricky as the cells grow more and more dense as time goes on. Find your own route and stick to it!

★ DARKCELLS

From System 6 onwards. There is little sunlight here and the starcells are totally invisible, except on the radar. Try not to spend all your time watching the radar! Luckily the Starcells still absorb laser light, so pinpoint them by watching your lasers until they blank out suddenly.

★ STARGATES

From System 7 onwards. All cell energies are combined to create a shimmering force barrier that cannot be breached. To pass a cell wall, go through the regularly dropped Stargates (which look like Starcells). The position of these will change as the workers move about, so watch out! When you collect a real Starcell, the shimmering of the walls will stop for 5 seconds, during which time no spores will be launched. Good job too!

★ SWITCHERS

From System 8 onwards. These are devious to say the least! They will travel along quite happily for a while, then suddenly all worker cells will reverse direction (not a pretty sight if you happen to be following them!) Observe from a distance if possible, and keep your wits about you.

PLAY TO WIN

TOTAL BACKUP POWER

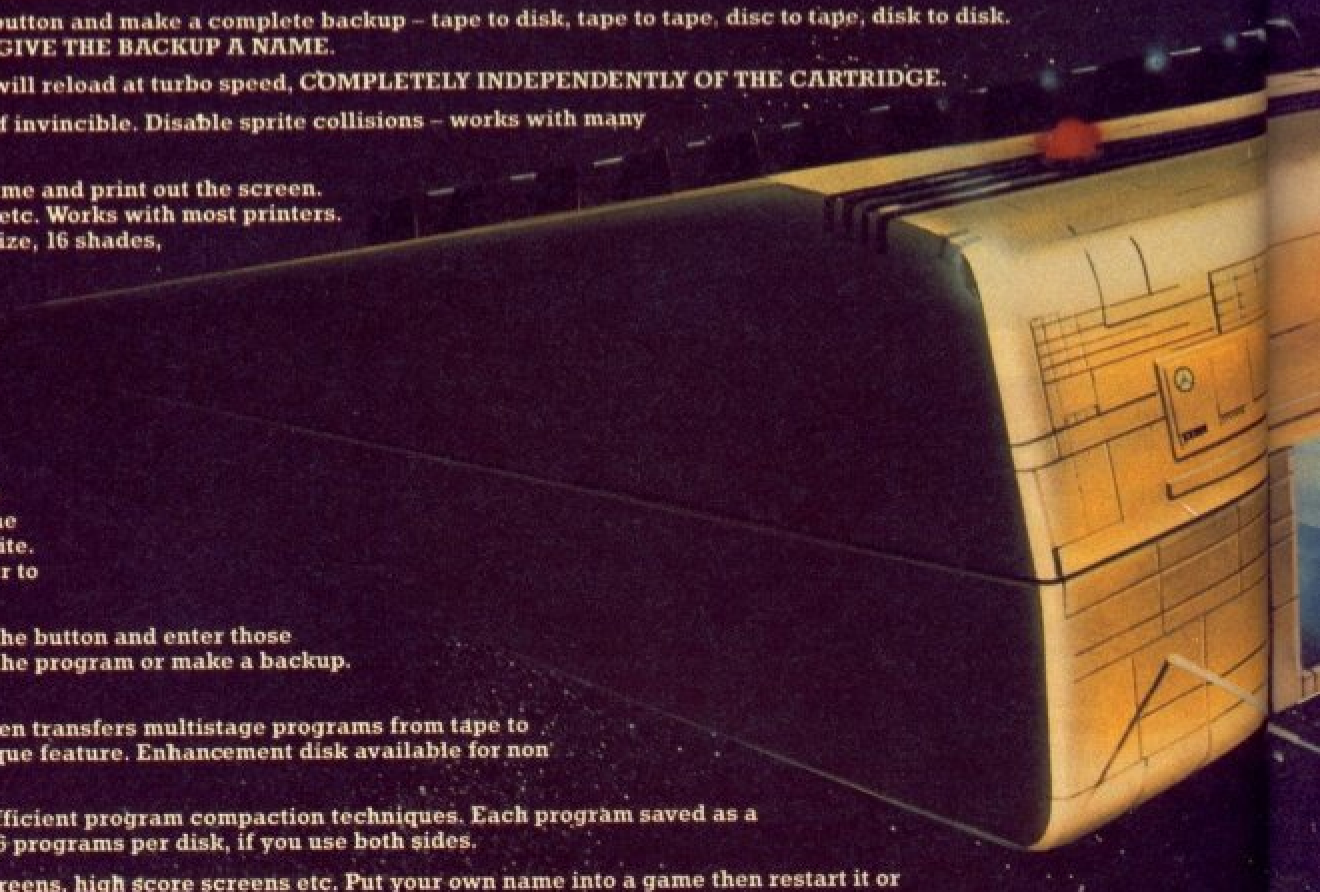
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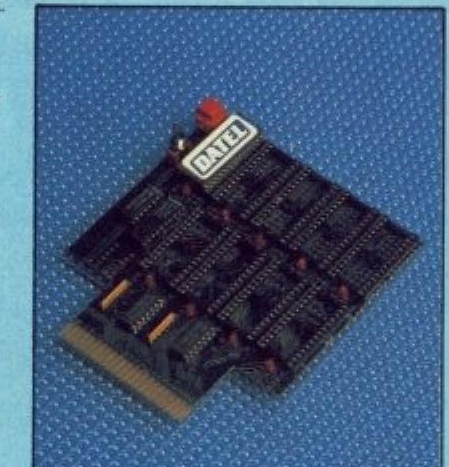
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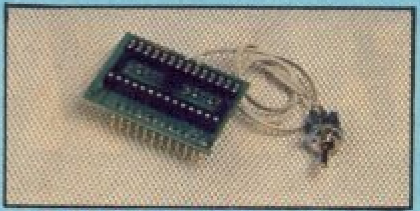
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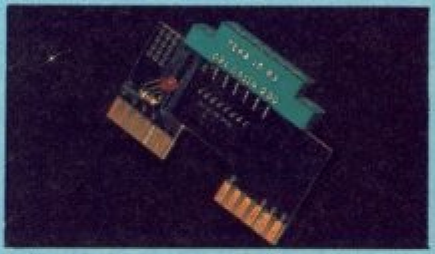


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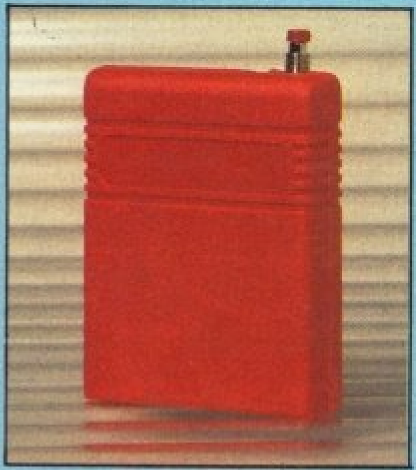
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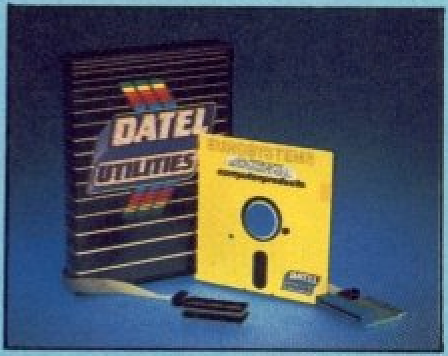
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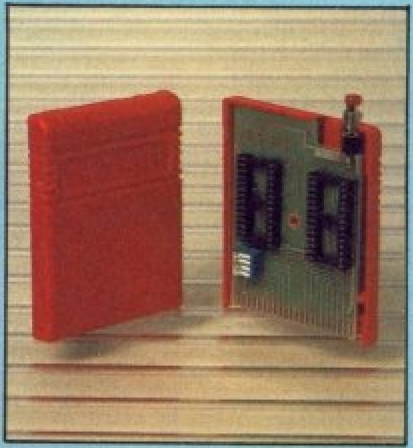
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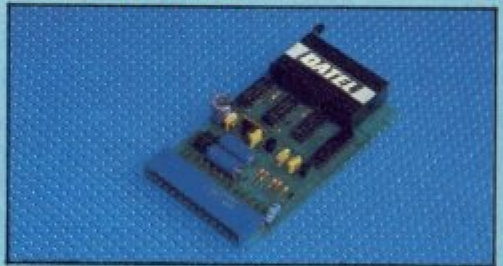
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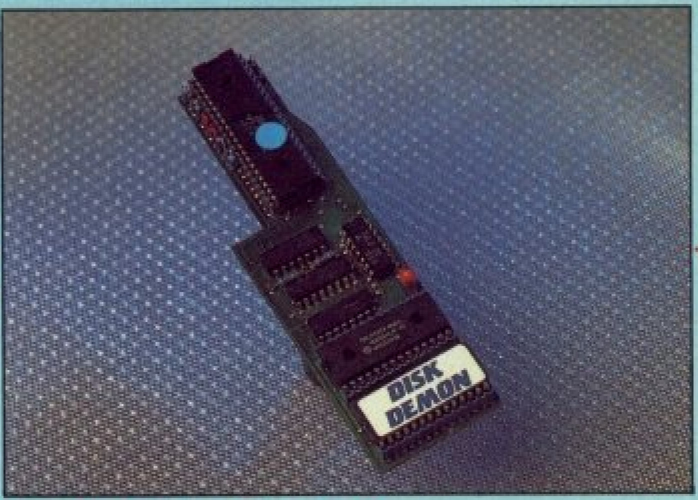


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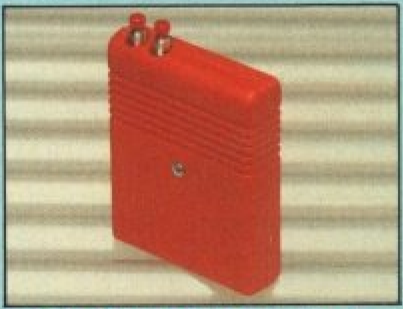
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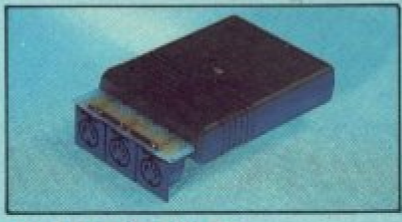


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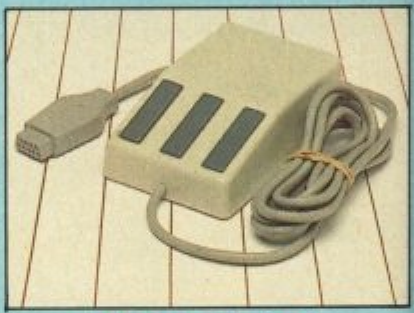


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Cool Spool

Cast your minds back to when Christmas came early. We're talking about the CU Spool enjoyed by thousands of you, and without doubt the best demo tape ever produced for a magazine.

We offered you a competition with the tape and it carried a prize worth more than mere money. We gave you the chance to be a CU writer. Review the Cool Spool we said. And hundreds of you did despite facing the wrath of the Ed's red pen. We were looking for good grammar and spelling obviously, but more important we were looking for wit and inventiveness. Many of the entries were of a high standard, but eventually we boiled it down to two pieces, neither of which strictly conform to the brief, but nevertheless show promise. Congrats to Gary Smith of Milton Keynes who suffered the misfortune of a duff cassette and Michael Marx of Ealing who wrote a dialectically materialist piece on the nature of demo tapes. Extracts from their reviews appear below. Well done lads, you can expect something for review in March!

Cool Spool, the concept, is a good one. "Cool Spool", the name, is decidedly dodgy. Whoever dreamt up that little chestnut will be onto *Sun* headlines before you know it. . . Still, once you've come to terms with the title, you can appreciate the tape for what it is — Free! — which can't be bad. And as far as game demos go, I'd venture that this is the best I've seen so far.

Personal Computer Games pioneered the idea of compiling demonstrations of games imminent for release when they put out their own natty little tape about three years ago. (Just before the magazine went out of business!) Though the demos on that tape were nearer static screenshots than the all-singing, all-dancing extravaganzas presented to us *Cool Spool.* Which brings about a question: When does a demo transcend the realms of mere demodom and become a feasible game?

Certainly, those contained on the Cool Spool would give your standard budget effort a run for its money. The bounciness of the buggy in Buggy Boy and the smoothness of the skateboard in 720° would support that claim. This poses the problem of the games buyer perhaps thinking twice about parting with his hard-scrounged pocked-money when the finished product becomes available. His line of thinking might be, "Why pay for a game that I've readily got (sort of) when there are loads of other I'm dying to have a go at?" Somehow I don't think this is quite what the software companies have in mind!

When's all's said and done, I believe that demos of this kind considerably enhance a magazine's appeal. And there is no reason why it shouldn't be of benefit to all parties involved. I suggest, however, that the software companies err on the side of caution when it comes to giving their secrets away. In this case it would seem that there's a fine line between lucrative promotion and a wholesale Santa Claus hand-out!

MICHAEL MARX

Well, where shall I start, three decent arcade games for a quid, check this out. I'll start on the packaging. It comes wrapped in a free rag (sorry mag), a nice change from translucent plastic, also a free length of sellotape for your little sister's mouth when she sees the free offering.

Inside the lining of the mag you find a cassette inlay. Ah, good, instructions I hear everyone ask. Nope, just 'Mastertronic blurb'. Then you realise the inlay doesn't wrap around anything cause there isn't a cassette box. Out come the scissors and into the bin goes the Ninja Master tape that your nan bought you last Christmas. Now you are ready for action.

Under six foot of christmas wrapping paper you discover your fireworks and sparklers that went missing and under them lies your willing 'unused since last Christmas' 64/128. Yes it still works. In goes the black plastic and off whirrs the old cassette player.

The sequence begins: "Found Buggy Boy, Novaload squeals, Lost Buggy Boy, main computer failure, READY." After two attempts the tape is switched. The Flying Shark does a tremendous flop and ends up marooned on a light blue screen in the outer regions of your TV set. 720° also lives up to it's name. It's not on my protractor so why should it be on a cassette?

GARRY SMITH

Red Arrows

H Clarke from Billericay in Essex is the lucky CU reader due to spend a whole day in Lincoln with the Red Arrows, courtesy of Electronic Arts. He's also getting some nosh, some Electronic Arts' games, and a photograph or two to remind him of the occasion. Coo. The following ten runners up each get a copy of Chuck Yeager's Advanced Flight Trainer. . .

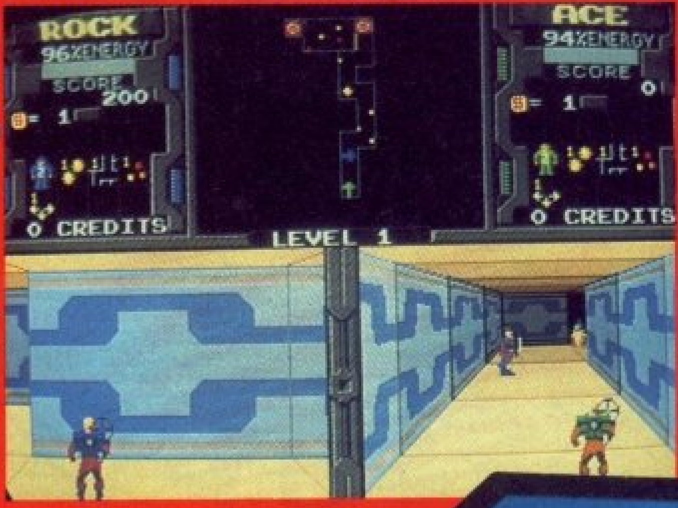
What's that? Oh yes, the answers. Right: Douglas Bader, True, and Concordski. How's that for efficiency.

A Smith, Lyneham, Wiltshire; P Rose, Snettisham, Norfolk; Daniel Phillips, Richmond, Surrey; Daniel Phillips, Richmond, Surrey; Richard Walker, Sedgley, Dudley; Chris Docherty, Loughton, Essex; Davis Maclauchlan, Yeovil, Somerset; Tony James, Woolwich, London; J Devlin, Hunstanton, Norfolk; Tony James, Woolwich, London; Sam Allen, Wroughton, Swindon; Andrew Procter, Queensbury, Bradford.



Use the drum for protection

How the 'alternative view' approach works.



XYBOTS

ATARI (3 × 10p)

Whatever happened to Atari, I hear you ask? 1987 was not, it must be said, a great year for the US-based company, formerly the number one coin-op manufacturers in the world.

Roadblasters and *APB* were both good games, but somehow when you put them up against the likes of Sega's *Out Run* and *Afterburner* or Taito's *Operation Wolf* they just don't have the same appeal.

But, just when we thought we'd heard the last of the A-team, we spotted *Xybots*, a dedicated two-player newie due soon at an arcade near you.

Xybots shares at least one feature with Sega's recently released *Xenophobe*: the screen is split with one section being allotted to each player so that you each play independently — but as you're theoretically running about the same spaceship/underground alien headquarters, when you and your mate arrive at the same spot the two screens become temporarily identical, with both characters shown.

However, where Bally Midway's three-player (and therefore three screen) spaceage alien fight to the death was flat, two-dimensional and lacking in playability, *Xybots* manages to be three-dimensional, fast, furious and fun.

The first sign that you're in for some serious thrillin' is the large speaker set just below the screen of the large dedicated console. Pop your coinage in and, as the first credit rings up, a massive digitised chord rings out. In *720°* Atari demonstrated just what they can do with coin-op sounds when they're in the mood and *Xybots* groundshaking synth noises are undeniably in the same class as the fab skateboarding sim's thrash rock.

The title screen tells you all you need to know by way of plot: you — and your companion if you're playing in two-player mode — are charged with the task of entering the headquarters of the tyrannical Xybots who have taken control of your beloved planet and wiping them all out.

Their headquarters are entered at ground level and extend for many floors underground. Each floor is in fact a maze, patrolled by various species of robot. You control your soldier and guide him forwards through the 3-D maze using one of those slightly fiddly joysticks which guides both your movement and — by twiddling the joystick head — the direction in which your character is facing (this means that if you just pull the joystick back your character shuffles backwards without turning). This movement mechanism is pretty confusing until you get the hang of it — as all the maze walls are of similar patterns and designs, when you're in a hurry, and in particular when you're under fire, you can find yourself spinning hopelessly around trying to escape or get the enemy on the business end of your lazer.

To help you work out which way you're heading, where you want to get to and, most usefully, where the various enemy guards are, there's a small map display of the maze that you're currently negotiating in the top left hand corner of the screen which shows, by means of arrows and coloured dots, who's who and what's where.

This is an absolutely essential feature — in the heat of battle and the increasingly intricate arrays of interconnecting corridors you lose your sense of direction pretty quickly. A quick glance at the map will set you straight.

And who are the enemies?

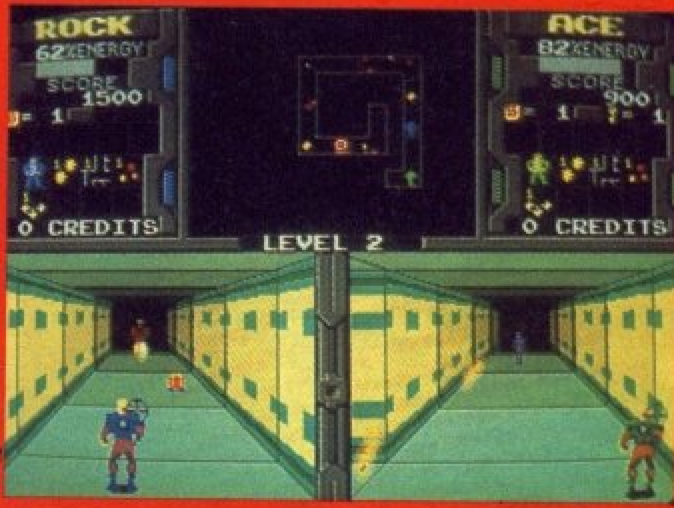


ADES



Up the escape pods into the robo stores . . .

. . . And then onto another stage





Well, there are a few bog ordinary robots, who just hang about, shoot at you and obligingly die once you hit them. Then there are the tougher guardians of the Xybots complex who need to be hit several times before they go pop. There are tank robots who can only be destroyed when they've got their unprotected side turned towards you. There are suicidal carrier robots who'll kamikaze you if they're cornered. There are fly robots who hover above ground. And most annoyingly there are even some special guards who *won't* be detected on your map and may lurk around a corner to catch you unawares.

Each time you kill a robot you pick up a gold coin left behind by them. Weirdly enough, these coins can be used to purchase other features on the in-between level "quartermaster floors".

Among the features you can buy are extra energy and slow energy loss. You'll begin to appreciate how important energy levels are after you've gone through a couple of the tougher levels and have taken a few energy-sapping hits: you'll begin to hear the heart-beat tones which indicate that your time is running short and that you need to get to one of the exit pods on the level so as to get a chance to buy a bit more energy at the shop. Alternatively you can pick up energy pods dotted about the mazes. And, of course, there's increased firepower available too — and with all those human-hungry robots, it's just as well! There are also some barriers to duck behind in order to avoid destruction at particularly robot-ridden points and transporter pads which you can use to move to other sections of the maze. Some sections of maze are only accessible by key.

Eventually, if you can keep your energy up, you'll make it through to a showdown with one of the ruling Master Xybots. This sequence plays rather like the vertical phase of *Gryzor*. You have to shoot out five lights on the body of an enormous stationary Robot who blasts photon death down at you, punctuating his fight for life with digitised Darth Vader-esque speech.

Xybots is a genuinely exciting game to play even by yourself — once you've got the hang of the controls and your reactions sufficiently honed so that when you see the danger sign appear on the screen you know which direction to turn — but its real appeal is as a team game with you and your mate running about the place, covering each other, dividing up and destroying all the robots in the maze, and lending one another gold coins in the shop.

Whether Atari can hope to regain there pole position in the now fiercely competitive coin-op development market is uncertain. But, twenty-odd plays later, it has to be said that *Xybots* bears all the hallmarks of a company that's back in business.

Nick Kelly.



One player view

GRAPHICS:	8
SOUND:	8
TOUGHNESS:	7
ENDURANCE:	8
VALUE:	8
OVERALL:	8

NEXT MONTH

Right lissenup youse lot. What's the one thing CU has never had? That's right, a comic strip. Well not any longer because we got GAS, which is an acronymn for Groovey Arcade Stories, and it's gonna be the best strip this side of Crygena 1 (that's somewhere in the Resus Solar System.)

You'll find it among the usual superior collection of news and reviews. We'll also have the results of the CU Crucial Poll plus a very special offer. Be outside your newsagent on the 26th or we may have to send for the arcade police.

CU NEXT MONTH



SUPER REAL DARWIN

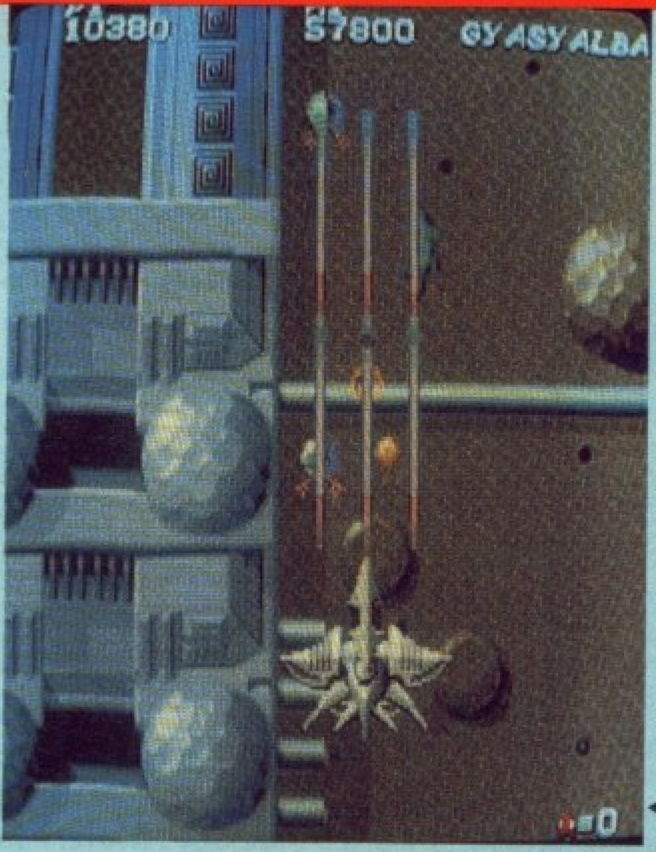
DATA EAST (3 × 10p)

Sometimes I worry about them, I really do. The brains who come up with ideas for coin-op games, that is.

Take this latest vertically-scrolling serial shoot 'em up from Data East.

I mean to say, imagine calling a game *Super Real Darwin*??? What possible connection could a no-nonsense arcade blast-or-be-blasted have with the famous evolution theorist? Was I going to be faced with wave upon wave of club throwing apes, each new bunch more physically advanced and higher up the tree of evolution until my final adversary was that king of the killers, good ol' *homo sapiens* himself?

Alas, *Super Real Darwin* isn't quite so exotic.



Evolve and waste those mutants!

You begin life as a plain, rather unimaginative looking spaceship. A couple of waves of nasty — and very speedy — whirling adversaries have to be dispatched before you are confronted with the first of the slower moving metallic creatures. Take one of these out and a strange object which looks like a cross between a bird and a playing card comes fluttering towards you. Make contact with one of these and — hey, presto — you grow a lump. You'll also find that your rather puny weapon has been upgraded.

Each time you pick up one of these icons your spaceship gets bigger until, bizarrely, it begins to look like a head, rather like that of Torquemada from 2000AD's *Nemesis* strip.

Your weapons change each time too, though, I found, not always for the better: the giant cannon, flame balls and huge blocks of fire were all very brilliant and useful, but I felt seriously ripped off whenever, by picking up one further icon, I sacrificed one of these lovelies for the pathetic and snail-like fluttering bombs. So why didn't I just pick up the icons I liked and leave the others? Well, perhaps there is some very cool way of acquiring the optimum arsenal and retaining it, but I certainly couldn't work it out. *SRD* is a pretty fast-moving game, and if there's any difference between the different extra-fire icons, I certainly didn't spot it.

And to think that home computer game reviewers complain about inadequate instructions!

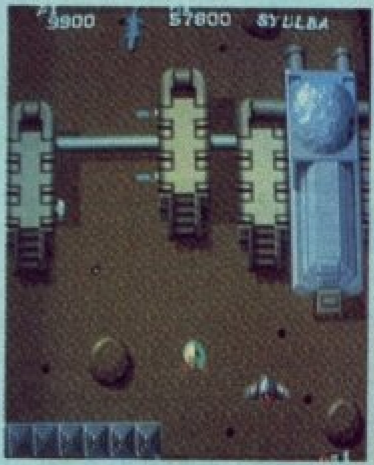
In fact, if ever a coin-op shoot 'em up needed some basic hints or instructions, it's *SRD*. Neither the opening screens nor the title screen give you any indication as to what exactly you're trying to achieve, other than the destruction of huge numbers of spacecraft, monsters and aliens.

And if any of you enterprising readers manage to work out the secret of extra weapon acquisition, perhaps you could turn your attentions to the vexed question of the lizards. You see, in addition to the fire button you've also got a bomb sight floating several inches above your ship and a bomb release button. The only things that you can usefully bomb are mysterious lizards which waddle down the screen, spitting bombs up at you — all the other opponents are airborn. It's not easy to line up these creatures in the bomb sight when you're simultaneously being set upon by furious waves of flying attackers, but when you do succeed in dispatching one of these alligator thingies they leave behind a charred shadow and a DNA icon.

Now, being well-versed in the ways of science I remembered that DNA is the name given to the basic genetic building blocks which determine all creatures' physical characteristics, and I therefore reasoned that, in a game named after one of the foremost gentic researchers of all time, picking up the DNA icons would surely make my little spaceship undergo some very spectacular change. Wrong, nothing happened.



Natural games selection.



Yikes it's puny weapon time.

Incidentally, in *SRD* when you sustain a hit, that isn't necessarily the end of one of your three precious lives: if you've picked up icons — and are therefore bigger and better-equipped than when you started out — what happens is that for every hit you sustain, you shed one of your pieces, until finally you're reduced to your basic ship. Only then can you be destroyed. Which, if you ask me, is a much more civilised way of doing things than the usual *R-Type*-style one-hit-and-you-lose-everything-you've-worked for.

The annoying thing about *SRD* is that I've got a feeling that underneath all the non-user-friendliness there's a good game struggling to get out. The action is fast and furious and if I could just work out exactly what I'm supposed to do I'm pretty sure I could get to like this one.

Nick Kelly.

GRAPHICS:	6
SOUND:	6
TOUGHNESS:	8
ENDURANCE:	4
VALUE:	5
OVERALL:	5

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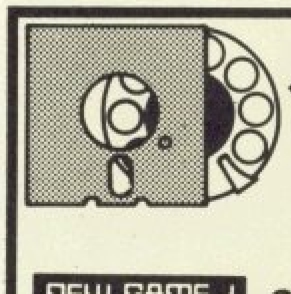
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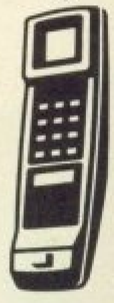
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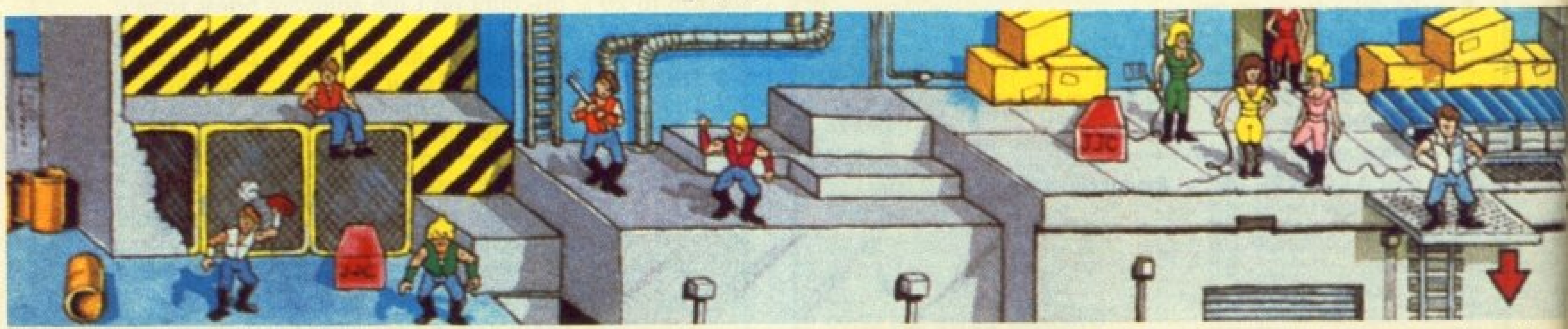
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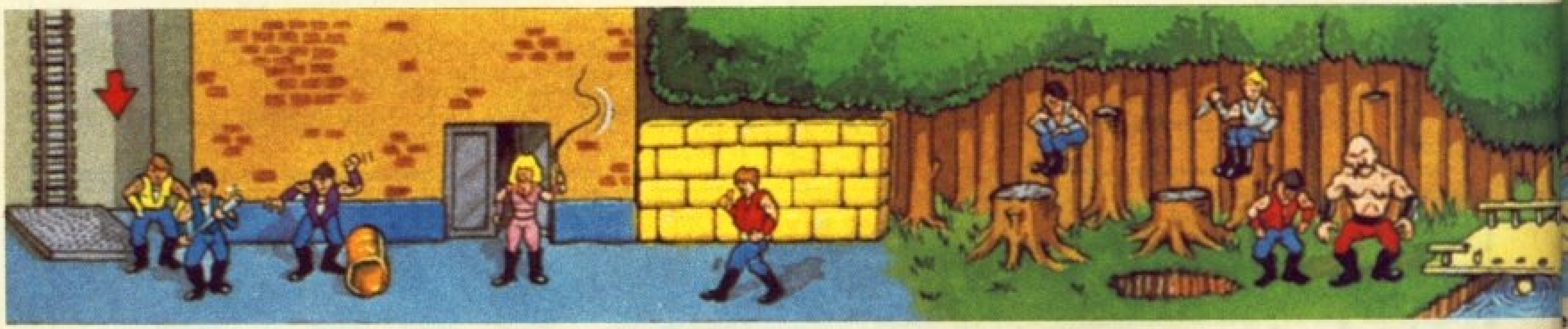
A) Wise up now guys, they've just taken your chick. It would be tempting to go steaming into them, but you know the ol' saying: "Don't get mad, get even!"

B) Careful now, this schmuck is swinging a bat in front of your face — and it ain't no table tennis bat. One good right-hand (or foot) will send any weapon the enemy is holding spinning to the ground.



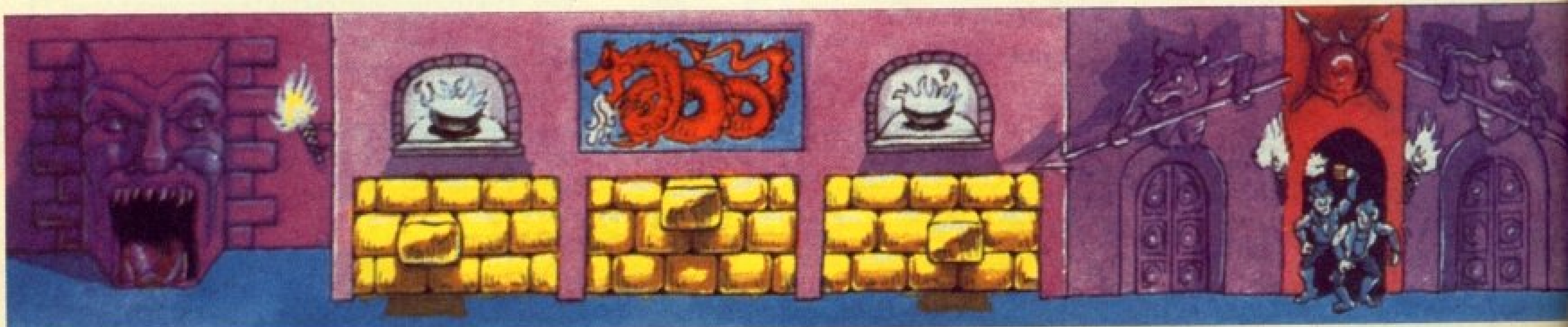
C) Watch out! There's a hole here, you son of a Portugese flowerpot-maker. One fall down any hole, off any cliff, is lethal. Life gone. You only get two lives for your twenty pee.

D) Watch this conveyor belt. Try not to step on it unless you must, as it will attempt to pull you into its machinery and kill you. However, that's not to say you can't try using this fun trick on the enemy.



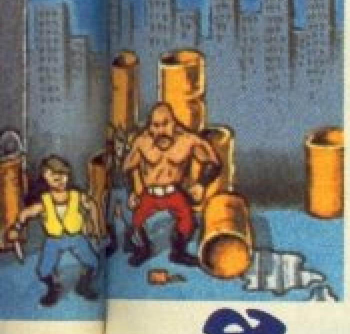
E) It seems as if some mindless, violent yobbo has needlessly smashed a hole in the bridge. But that's not your concern, What is your concern is crossing it. Simply move as far as possible to





F) You've made it this far so I don't want no screwing up now. You're in the base and just because the stones of this wall are about to pop out to attempt to smash you off your feet, that's no excuse to give up. The simplest way to dodge these is to . . well, there isn't one! But the next best way is to keep jumping past these and hopefully not that many will hit you.

G)These beautifully carved gothic gargoyles are not all they may first seem to be. They may look harmless enough, but watch out for those spears which they will happily prod you in the face.



Double Dragon





n it
into
t to
emy.

We here at C.U. first got hooked on Taito's *Double Dragon* after we'd all managed to blitz the levels of its predecessor *Renegade*. A few hundred 10 pees later and we realized that this new beat 'em up was no pushover. So we sent in a bunch of steel-chewing, 'ard as nails Sicilian Gamescrackers to sort it out. After rubbing out the boss this is what they came up with . . .

The Elbow

This is the ultimate. The best The only move which is safe to use on absolutely any kind of opponent. To pull it off simply press the jump and punch buttons at the same time, then pull the joystick in the opposite direction from which you wish to send the blow. When you are in trouble, or the enemy seem to be immune to any of the other blows you are using, then use this — Although for variety's sake, don't use it throughout the whole game.

The Kick

Not an altogether effective move, but when executed correctly it's very good fun indeed.

The Knee

If you stand a couple of inches away from an opponent and press the kick button repeatedly, your player may pull his opponent down by his hair and repeatedly knee him in the face until he is no longer alive. Good, clean fun!

The Weapons

If you look closely at our beautifully drawn map you will see there are many weapons in the hands of the other gang members. No this isn't the result of our artist's over-vivid imagination — these weapons can actually be used and are all correctly placed on our map. Here is a run-down of what weapons you can use and when to use them . . .

Whip

This is usually found in the sweaty palms of the women (thats Leather Goddesses of Death as we at C.U. have chosen to call them). These are not really worth picking up, but if you feel like a cheap thrill you can effectively whip the women with these. Anyone else will probably laugh and put a bat across your face!



e—without falling in, you putz!—
e of the ho the jump button (on most
n just stab is the one in the middle) and push
hines that the time.
t at the sa



Baseball Bat

As you can probably imagine, steel bats are quite a good thing to have whilst enjoying a jolly good game of rumble. They are extremely useful against anyone not very tall, but don't bother trying to use it against any of the big guys — especially THE BOSS.

Rocks Barrels & Boxes

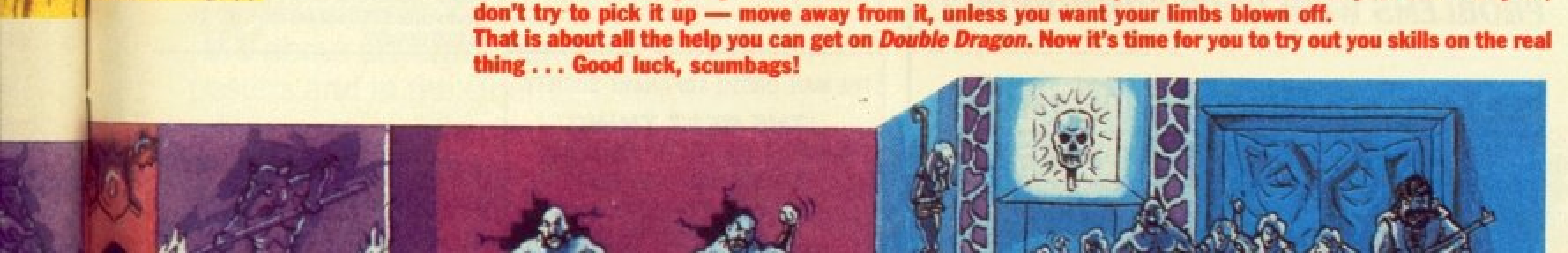
These are found lying around along the way and are always worth using. Picking them up and throwing them at your assailants is quite effective.

Knives

You cannot see these until they are thrown at you or you punch a guy who happens to drop his. This is another type of weapon always worth using, but they are few and far between.

Dynamite

This is another weapon you won't know someone has until they decide to throw it at you. When they do, don't try to pick it up — move away from it, unless you want your limbs blown off.
That is about all the help you can get on *Double Dragon*. Now it's time for you to try out you skills on the real thing . . . Good luck, scumbags!



s are
look
pears

H) The final stage! Can you stand up to the pressure of being attacked from every position by every conceivable type of enemy? The guys are all pretty easy to take care of, in the usual manner of swing your bones around, that is, all of them except THE BOSS! This guy is t.o.u.g.h. — tough. He packs a shooter, no bats or whips for him. Give him too much time to aim and he'll blow you away. The trick is to stand on top of him and continually elbow him in the face.

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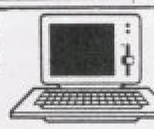
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Tommy's Tips

Be a Pal

Would an American Amiga be able to operate with a British TV and software etc. providing that a suitable transformer is used. Also would a C64 disk drive (i.e. 1541) also operate (with transformer) on my British 64?
Ryan Dalzell,
Co. Tyrone

An American Amiga will definitely NOT work with a UK television set; the standards are totally different. The US version works on 60Hz and the NTSAC TV standard, while the UK version works on 50Hz and the PAL TV system.

A monitor may work, but you will have the problem of possible screen judder due to the different mains frequencies, as well as the problem that the US picture is actually smaller (200 lines not 240) than the UK (which is why US software tends to leave the bottom part of the screen blank on UK systems).

As for an American disk drive for the 64, you may again get problems with the clock frequencies which might upset some of the protection methods currently in use on commercial software, although your own programs shouldn't be affected. As a general rule, try to avoid mixing US and UK hardware if you want guaranteed reliable operation.

Dip stick

Could you please answer these questions—:
1) On a disc drive what is a 'DIP' switch and what is it for?
2) Are all commercial software disks for the C64 5¼ inch?
3) How do I save something to disk if there is already something on it which I wish to keep as there is no fast forward or, such like?
4) What are your views of the Excelerator Plus? Is it better than the 1541 or 1541C and does it take 5¼ inch (floppy)disks?
I would be much obliged if you could answer thiese questions as I hope to upgrade to disc in the near future.
Michael Collins,
Crewe

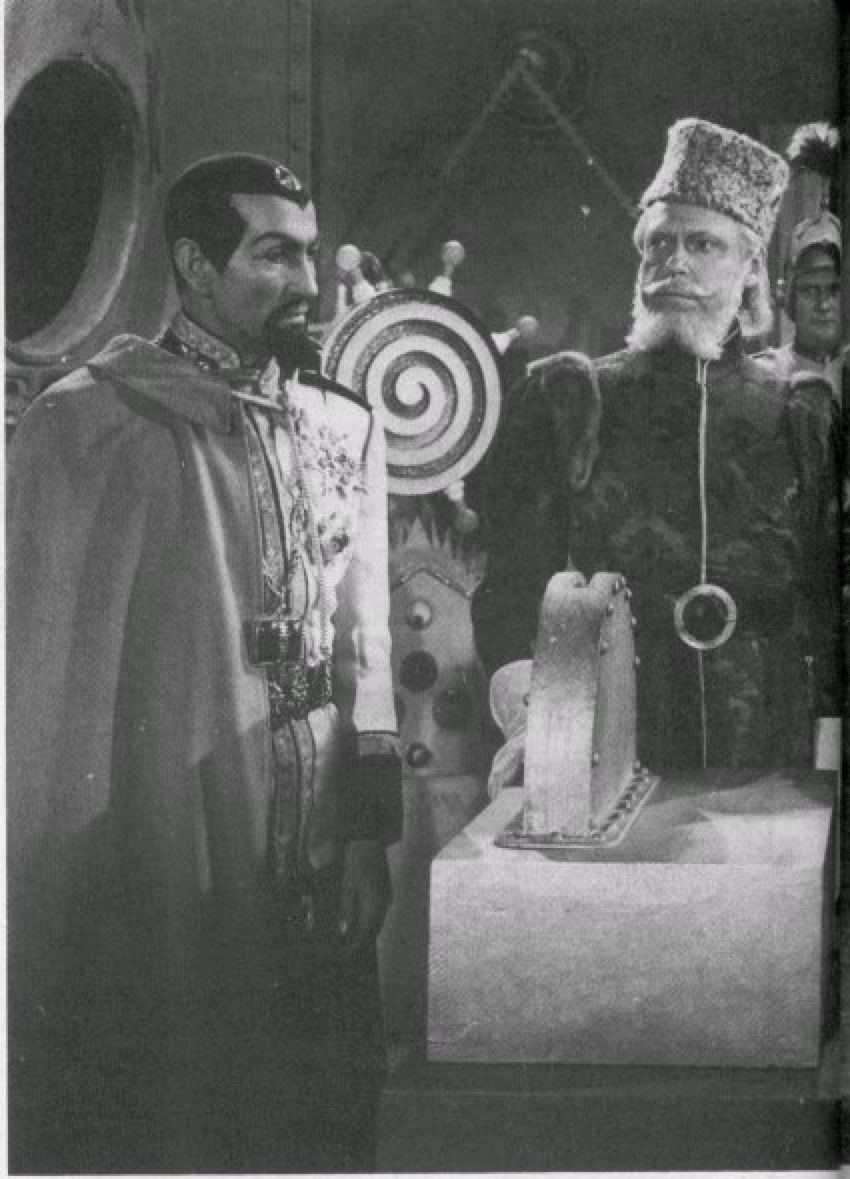
A 'DIP' switch is a 'Dual In-Line' switch which just means that it looks like an integrated circuit chip and fits into similiar sized holes on a PCB. It is not peculiar to disk drives (indeed the 1541 doesn't even have any as far as I know) and is much more likely to be found on printers and printer interfaces. All it does is select particular functions, such as device number, font type, LF after CR etc.

As for software, all commercial disk software for the CBM 64 is on 5.25" single sided disks. Unlike a tape, a disk drive can access any part of the disk surface at any time. Each disk has an area called the directory, which tells the drive where to find a particular program. When you save something new to the disk, the drive looks for a free area, stores the program in it and then puts an entry in the directory so that it knows what programs are there, and also sets the Block Allocation Map (BAM) so that the area is reserved and not used next time. Provided there is free space left on the disk you can save several programs and the drive will do all the searching for you.

Finally, the Excelerator Plus is very good value for money. It is certainly better than the 1541, and cheaper than the 1541C. Since it is specifically designed to work with the CBM 64, it uses exactly the same disks.

Collision

I have a Commodore 64 and have a big problem with sprite collision detection. OK so we all know how to use the collision detection register to find out what sprites are being hit (*oh year, 'course we do—Ed*) but let's say 5 sprites are touching each other all at the same time, how can I tell if sprite 1 is touching sprite 2, 3, 4, or 5 because the collision detection register will only tell me which sprites are hit—not what sprite is hitting what sprite.
Ansel Lawrence
Port Talbot



What do you mean they're not compatible . . .?

Rather a tricky problem, this. Certainly if the sprites are completely overlapped then there is no way of telling, since if you think about it you have actually collided with all of them at once! However, that wasn't the answer you wanted I'm sure, but I can only offer a partial solution.

First, by checking the collision register (or servicing the interrupt) at the right point you know immediately a new collision has occured and since you know which sprite was being moved at that instant you know at least one of the sprites involved. The way I get round the problem is if there are more than two collision indications then I jump to a routine which compares the relative locations of the sprites involved. Normally there will be one of the 'already touching' sprites closer to the new sprite than the others and I assume therefore that it is this one that has triggered the collision. This is by no means fool-proof, since one sprite may occupy only a small part of its nominal area while another, slightly further away, may actually extend beyond the smaller one. In these cases where sprites are different sizes I use a 'percentage size' factor to try to compensate.

At the end of the day however, unless the sprites are moving very slowly, the player has great difficulty in distinguishing visually which sprites are actually touching when they are all overlapping that closely, so a slight error really doesn't matter. I'm afraid the answer is experiment, there's no simple method.

Connections

Could you please tell me how to connect my 64C to an Epson printer, and where do I get the equipment from as I have seen nothing in any adverts about it.
Andrew Hall,
Rochester, Kent

There are a number of interfaces on the market for connecting a Centronics parallel printer to the CBM 64 (or 64C). One of the neatest is the Comprint Interface, which actually fits inside an Epson printer and plugs directly into the



64 with a single cable; no power supply, no extra desk space needed. The good news is that a new version has just been announced, including an 8K buffer to speed up printing (or at least release the computer faster). The price is £34.99, although the 2K buffer version is now only £29.99.

Both versions allow the Epson to fully emulate a Commodore printer as well as allowing the features of the Epson to be accessed for word-processing etc. Comprint is made by Micro Control Systems (MCS) who can be contacted on 0773 530777. Your local dealer should also be able to obtain one for you.

Don't!

● I have had my 64 for about one year now. The thing that puzzles me is, what is the silver thing (wire) that is coming out of the side of the datassette connector on the datassette cable.

I think it is for connecting line 1 to line 3 on the user port to reset the 64 (my 64 hasn't got a reset switch), but I don't want to try anything until I know what it is for sure. I would be grateful if you could tell me what it is and what it is used for.
James Coates,
Leeds

The extra wire coming out of the side of the data-recorder cable is an earthing strap and is purely there to conform with the Federal radio interference regulations in the USA. It serves no useful purpose on UK equipment as there is nothing to connect it to. Under no circumstances should you connect this wire to any pin on the User Port.

Reading list

● I wonder if you could list all the available machine code books for the Amiga. Could you print the names, publishers, ISBN numbers, and also their uses (ie. Beginners, Reference etc.) I would be eternally grateful if you could do this for me.
James Strange
Crewkerne,
Somerset

When you say ALL the machine code books for the Amiga, it isn't quite as straightforward as you seem to imply. The Amiga is quite a complex machine, quite unlike any of the Commodore machines that have gone before. Although it uses the 68000 chip, there are all the other processors which interact with it to take into account. In order to write correct machine code on the Amiga you have to understand a good deal about the design of the machine as well as just how the processor works and what the instruction set consists of. The following list is definitely not comprehensive, since there are many duplicates from different publishers, but it will give you some idea of what you will need:

1. Amiga Hardware Reference Manual (Pub: Addison-Wesley).
2. Amiga ROM Kernal Ref Manual: Exec (Pub: Addison-Wesley).
3. Amiga ROM Kernal ref Manual: Libraries (Pub: Addison-Wesley).
4. Programming the 68000 (Pub: Sybex).
5. The Kickstart Guide to the Amiga (Pub: Ariadne Software Ltd).

You might get away with numbers 1, 4 and 5 as the absolute minimum, but I would recommend all 5 if you really want to get stuck into the writing of good m/code programs. The first 4 books can be obtained either from Silica Shop or Computer Manuals Ltd, while the last one is from Ariadne Software direct. The five books will set you back about £116, so hopefully you now have a better idea of the scale of the problem.

Print poser

● I'm writing this letter because I'm wondering about buying an Amiga A500. Now I have a Commodore 64 with a Commodore MPS 1200 printer. My question is: can I get my printer to run with an Amiga A500? If I can, what will I have to change? In my printer I have a "Commodore Serial Interface", and the cable uses the "serial" port. Please answer this letter quickly, because I don't buy an Amiga if my printer don't work with it.
Bjorn Stensrud,
Fagernes,
Norway.

There *is* a way of connecting your existing Commodore printer, although it requires the use of the 64 as well. Trilogic have produced a printer cable called 'Amiga Print Link', which consists of a cable to link the Amiga and the 64, plus a software cartridge which does all the hard work. It only costs £29.95, but it does mean that you can't offset the cost of the Amiga by part-exchanging or selling your 64.

Cartridges

● I own a C64 and have a small query that I hope you can help me with. I noticed an advert in your magazine for a 'cartridge development system' by Datel electronics. I was wondering if it's possible to load software, such as Commodore's Music Expansion System, into it and use it as a normal cartridge? Your help would be gratefully appreciated.
Graham Butler,
Fort William

In theory, the answer to your question is 'Yes', but it very much depends on how the software is written. Unless the commercial program is re-locatable you could find problems with the program not running in its new address.

There are ways round this, by moving the code back into memory as part of the start-up routine of the cartridge, but this supposes that you have enough room for the code to do this. Certainly the cartridge development system is designed to allow you to put your own programs into a cartridge form, but I honestly cannot say which commercial programs are amenable to this sort of storage method.

Tommy's Tips

SILVER SCREEN SCENE

Here's the first in an irregular series of film reviews brought to you by the Barry Normans of CU. And why not? The first batch conists of two recent releases in the cinema and a newly launched video, all are licensed conversions to home computer too.



MASTERS OF THE UNIVERSE (18)

Directed by Gary Goddard
Perhaps it's not fair of me to describe "Masters Of The Universe" as the worst film that has ever been made, but I must say that 'Masters Of The Universe' is certainly far and away the worst film I've ever seen. It manages to combine totally useless acting, cruddy script-writing, miserable directing, dismal music and v. un-state-of-the-art special effects.

This particular mixture can sometimes be quite entertaining — the ability to make a really spectacularly bad film is a talent granted to but a few. Sadly, however, 'Masters' isn't even terrible in an interesting enough way to qualify as a camp classic.

The story? Well, it seems that the evil Skeletor and his forces of darkness, in the fierce struggle for the planet Eternia, have succeeded in imprisoning the gentle Sorceress in a tubular energy field which is slowly draining mystical power from her and transferring same to Skeletor. Within 24 hours she will be completely helpless, and Skeletor will be all-powerful.

The good guys consist of the sword-wielding He-Man (played by the huge blond and virtually talentless Dolph Lundgren, previously best known as Sly Stallone's evil Commie opponent Ivan Drago in "Rocky IV"), the pretty but vacant Teela and her grizzly warrior dad Man-At-Arms.

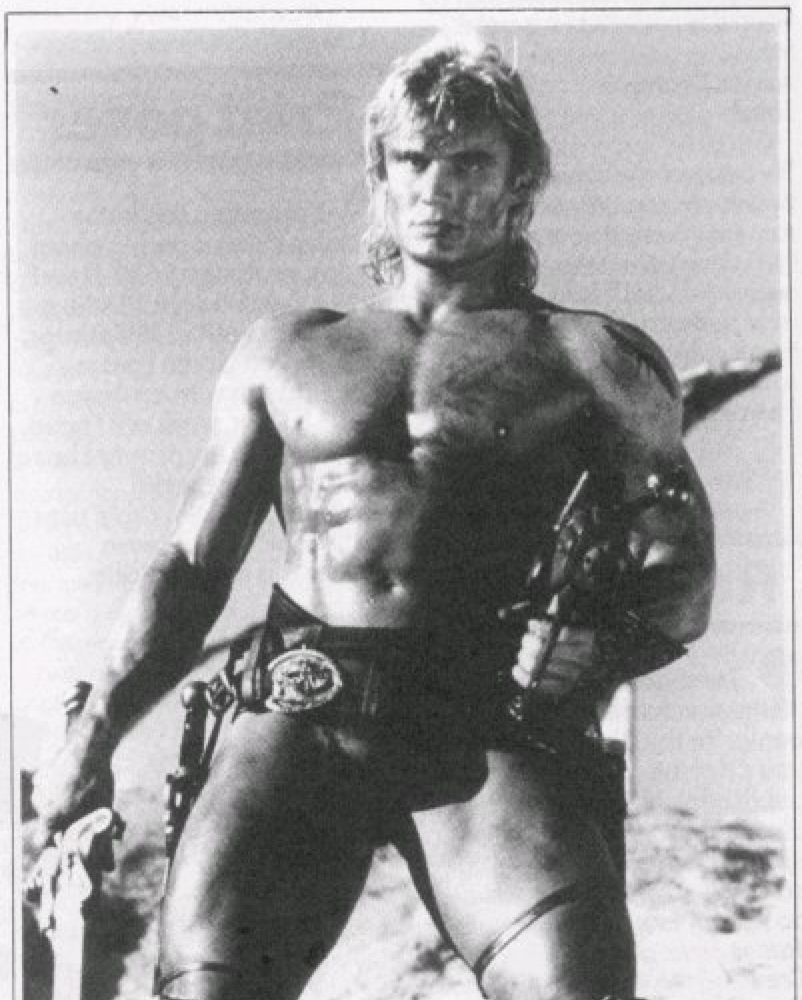
After a failed rescue attempt the heroes retire to the house of the sickeningly twee dwarf Guildor.

This half-pint is possessed of a device called the cosmic key, which although it looks like the mid-section of a saxophone, has the power to transport those in its immediate vicinity to any part of the universe. The hapless soldiers of good decide to use it to beam somewhere more peaceful to regroup. Things go a bit wonky though, and our heroes find themselves roaming around the town of Colby in deepest California. The cosmic key lands in a nearby cemetary, only to be picked up by local lass Julie Winston and her appalling synthesizer-playing boyfriend Kevin.

The rest of the movie is basically a dreary Keystone Kops chase, as Skeletor his hideous henchmen and He-Man's mob (aided by Julie and Kevin) scrabble about town in search of the key.

There's a fair amount of laser-shooting and sword-clanging along the way, but even these "action" scenes are unbelievably dull and run-of-the-mill. You just *know* there's absolutely no chance that any of the goodies are going to get zapped — which is a great shame.

Nope, I'm afraid if "Masters Of The Universe" were reincarnated as computer, it'd be an Oric.
Nick Kelly



PLATOON (PG)

Dir. Oliver Stone
Soul-searching over Vietnam reached new depths last year as US





directors poured their hearts out in 'war is hell' movies. Oliver Stone's effort has now had its run round the cinemas and made it into your local video shop.

Actor Charlie Sheen drops out of college and joins the fight for his country 'just like my dad and my grandfather.' The other guys in his platoon can't understand why he volunteered instead of waiting for the draft. 'I didn't see why the poor kids should do all the dirty work', he says, to which one of the black guys says, amazed, "Man you gotta be rich to think like that!" It's the only moment of political insight in the film. After that it degenerates into a quagmire of liberalism over terrorising villagers. Never mind the reason they were there in the first place.

This is all illustrated by the struggle between the 'good and evil' characters, the two sergeants, Barnes, a mean son-of-a-



slaughterhouse, and Elias a laid-back guy who prefers blowin' dope. That kind of thing, the violence and the language (the "f" words gets used more often than the the word) makes this all pretty unsuitable for kiddies.

The storyline traces Charlie Sheen's metamorphosis from greenhorn to battle-hardened vet. The action sequences, particularly the night fight are frantic and generate a fair deal of adrenalin just watching them. And it's at this level that Platoon works best, as a



straight war film with full marks for realism. Hollywood is still a long way from making the definitive 'Nam flick.

Mike Pattenden

PREDATOR
(18)

From pumping iron to pumping bullets ...in his 13-year, 11-film career, Arnold Schwarzenneger has proved that no-one can play Arnold Schwarzenegger quite as well as he can. In his latest movie, one of the biggest grossing films of 1987 from American box office receipts alone, Arnold plays — well, Arnold Schwarzenegger, alias Major Dutch Schaefer.

Arnie, along with his team of crack commandos, hs been assigned the task of rescuing a group of diplomats who have been captured by guerillas in the Latin American jungle.

However, things are not what they seem — as Arnie and friends realise when they find the skinned corpses of another receonnaissance team.

Undaunted, they arrive at the guerilla camp in time to witness the execution of a prisoner. So they proceed to wipe out the entire guerilla force in a particularly explosive scene, and Arnie demonstrates his talent as an actor by throwing around a few laughably bad one-liners as he runs amok. When the dust settles, the team finds out that they've been double crossed, and so, with a female guerilla in tow, they make tracks. Only to run in to real danger.

The *real* action starts, when the predator picks off the team, one by one. Despite several attempts to trap it and kill it, eventually only Arnie remains and the chase begins. Arnie becomes the hunted ...

With the exception of the first cringe-worthy ten minutes in which Arnie is reunited with his old sparring partner, Dillon (played by Carl Weathers — perhaps better known for his part as Apollo Creed in *Rocky II* and *III*), *Predator* is tension and action all the way. The violence is extremely graphic, but very effective — in fact at times it's so over the top you can't take it seriously.

Predator won't win any awards for originality, but the weak plot has been competently executed and the special effects are outstanding. A veritable treat for Arnie lovers everywhere or for anyone who enjoys plenty of gore and fast-paced action.

Gary Penn



HOT SHOTS

Oh cripes, another year, another column. Well, not exactly. This year's going to be different. For a start I'm Ed now (about time too thought I'd never get rid of that O'Lacey character) which means I'm going to be a busier chap and won't have time to do the column any longer. Don't worry though, I'll give you something just as good in its place.

I must say though how humbled I was that my exploits should be officially recognised by all those people in the industry who know me and love me for the person I am. This year's Indin (that's the annual dinner organized for the software industry) handed me their most prestigious award, G.O.B. of the Year. No, I can't remember what it stood for, but I think I got the message. I was so overwhelmed, particularly when the Firebird section of my fan club showered me with flowers, that, for once, I was speechless. I stood in front of the microphone and mumbled incomprehensibly into it. My only defence is that I had the most appalling cold and could barely speak anyway.

Hotshots wasn't the only person to receive an award in the industry's New Year's Honours list. Deputy Editor Gary Penn was also presented with a 'Clive' as they're known.

As you'd expect with an industry that likes a drink (putting it mildly) there was more than one 'do' this Christmas. There was an alternative Indin at a yuppie restaurant in Battersea and an outing which was basically a pub crawl down the King's Road. Most of the members of this particular outing went off to a Chinese restaurant afterwards. Not so the Ocean boys — they chose instead to gate-crash the EMAP Christmas party a little way up the road in the dinosaur room of the Natural History museum.

Meanwhile the wheels of justice have already turned in 1988 resulting in a shock for sim company Microprose. The American company has been forced to change its name by business software publishers Micropro. Hotshots to the rescue! I've decided to help the sim boys in their name change by running a competition. The person who comes up with the most suitable title for the dismonikered company will win a superdooper prize. Entries to the usual address.

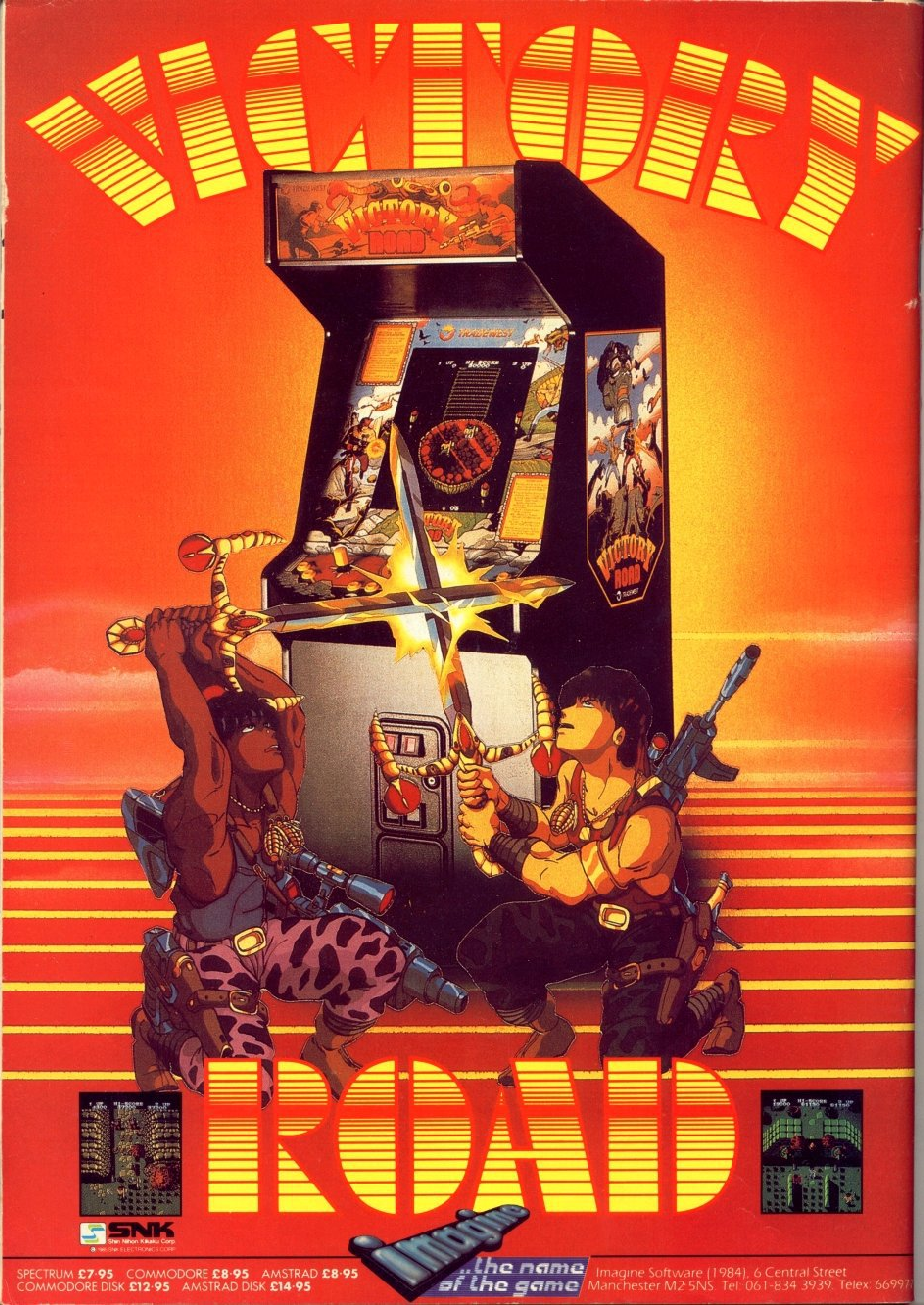
So what can we expect from the next year? I asked my cousin Mystic Mike who happens to be a bit of a crystal ball gazer what he reckoned might happen this year. This is what he came up with:

February: Microprose boss 'Wild Bill Stealey sets up a satellite TV station to bring simulations into your lives with the aid of God.
March: System 3 announce martial arts licence.
April: US Gold release a boxed set of Executive World Class Leaderboard Tournament Deluxe vols 1-10.
May: Gremlin and CRL spend three weeks in the High Court during a bitter dispute for '30's Czechoslovakian mouse cartoon character, Krotszch. "It's the last rodent character licence left and we're not going to miss out" maintains Gremlin boss Ian Stewart.
June: Ocean release their first film simultaneously in the cinemas and on video but get beaten to the home computer licence by Activision.
July: In an audacious marketing ploy Mastertronic give free Arcadia coin-op away with every budget game.
August: Domark sign Edwina Currie for calorie counter game.
Sept: Virgin release game based on Richard Branson flying across the Channel in an inflated Mates condom.
Oct: Firebird lose top music programmer Ubik when his single becomes massive hit in Denmark and he decides to tour there with his backing band The Nobheads.
Nov: Elite change over to Julian calendar in an attempt to get products out on time.
Dec: Firebird announce Star Trek nearly complete. "We are on schedule for a January '89 release", says Sean Brennan at Telecom Mission Control.



▶ Hotshots dedicates top industry award to cold.


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